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NOVEMBER 1953

J. P. STERN

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CONTENTS

J. P. STERN

On Stylistic Analysis

p. 67

T. W. HUTCHISON

James Mill and the Political Education of Ricardo

p. 81

WILLIAM WALSH

Columbia and Byzantium: The Notion of Character in
Education and Literature

p. 101

Book Reviews

p. 114

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Oxford University Press

ON STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

J. P. STERN

Te totum applica ad textum, rem totam applica ad te.

JOHANN ALBRECHT BENGEL¹

SEEMINGLY modest in its claims, austere and a little work-stained in its execution, progressive in intention and shaky in its philosophical foundations, Stylistic Analysis has made its entry into the study of German literature in this country. Heralded by the discovery that two of Gottfried Keller's farmers wear caps whose tips point against the wind (which fact is said to impair his realism), the method has by now established itself sufficiently firmly to accommodate, perhaps even be in need of, a few critical remarks. It has many virtues, for it acts as a healthy corrective to many old-established deficient views of poetry. Yet it also has a great failing, for it makes into a major issue something that is an obvious preliminary commonplace, namely the fact that a poem must be read before it is understood. That our reading habits are bad is deplorable; to cure them is not the task either of literary criticism or of a university curriculum. Any critical practice which makes this cure its main task, or which, without making it its main task, tries to do anything other than give as direct and concrete an account as possible of the experience that reposes in a poem, is singularly apt to make its practitioner forget that the issue before him is *not* technical analysis, or Close Reading, or some awe-inspiring hypostatization called the Text, or How to Read a Page, but the poem. The extent to which Stylistic Analysis may be made directly responsible for the extravagances of its adherents is a matter of conjecture; nevertheless, the charge against it is that it provides no corrective against, only an inducement to these extravagances, that it is, in fact, not critical of itself.

1

A recent study in German lyrical poetry² throws some light on the virtues and failings of the method. The book attempts, in a fairly comprehensive chronological account, to give the story of German poetry during the last two hundred years through a series of textual interpretations of what are commonly recognized as 'representative' poems, and to do this according to the canons of Stylistic Analysis. The idea of this enterprise, which has not so far been undertaken in

¹ Quoted by Karl Löwith in *Die Neue Rundschau*, LXIV (1953) i, 112.

² S. S. PRAWER, *German Lyric Poetry: A Critical Analysis of Selected Poems from Klopstock to Rilke*. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 25s. net.

English, is the book's outstanding merit. What is here attempted is a major critical task, among the greatest that German literature has to offer. And certainly the author is to be congratulated at any rate on his courage in tackling it. His seriousness of purpose is commendable, and he is sufficiently well-read in the English literature of the period to be able to illustrate many of his remarks by reference to it. These cross-references to what is on the whole a fashionable English reading list enable Mr Prawer to emerge, every now and then, from the provincial fustiness in which criticism of German poetry is often seen to wilt. He writes a careful and almost urbane style, and is occasionally capable of verbal felicities, as when describing the clichés of a poetaster who 'puts his faith . . . in the "poems" which lie ready-made in the minds of his readers'. Now and then his formulations are less to the point, as when he speaks of Hölderlin's solemn 'Wie wenn am Feiertage' as 'this landscape in holiday mood'; or of George's 'Maximin' as 'a [handsome and intelligent boy with whom [George] had struck up a friendship', which is like saying that Beatrice was a buxom wench. But on the whole Mr Prawer's manner of writing is inoffensive enough, neither pedantic nor over-emphatic, graced with few adornments, if a little monotonous in its single-minded devotion to Close Reading of the Text. Of the various chapters in his book, the one on Stefan George, with its excellent quotation of a passage from *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, seems to me the most valuable. Apart from occasional lapses¹ the predominant mode of the book is obvious enough: it displays a considerable effort of scholarship, a sound acquaintance with sources and especially anthologies, a patient and painstaking regard for detail, early versions, and supporting biographical evidence, as well as familiarity with the technicalities of prosody. And on the whole it may be said that the book has its place in that academic tradition which equates 'brilliant' with 'unsound'.

The chief 'critical' tool here (and in a great many essays in Stylistic Analysis) is sound-analysis, to which the critic resorts at least 34 times in the course of his book: the shock of the glottal

¹ The book is not entirely free from howlers: the tendentious mis-translation of a quotation from *Dichtung und Wahrheit* turns Goethe's remark on the educative and pedagogic value of poetry and prose ('zum Anfang jugendlicher Bildung' *J.A.*, XXIV, 56) into an untenable *obiter dictum* on the nature of poetry; the mis-interpretation of 'Stunden' (in Rilke's poem 'Der Leser') is only possible if, after tearing the word out of its context, one tries to think up the least obvious, i.e., the most eccentric of interpretations — that of 'lessons' — and then returns to the poem, re-interpreting it, in the light of this 'discovery', as being about a 'childhood experience'; in the Hölderlin poem (102ff) the first stanza is interpreted as if it contained no logical subject; consequently it is offered as a mere illustration of the main argument (a pronoun relating to a possessive genitive in the second stanza is made the subject of the first), while in fact the weight of meaning is distributed equally throughout the poem.

stop . . . muffled *w*'s . . . the gay *e* . . . languorous long vowels . . . the dark *a* sounds . . . the gay echoing *ü* . . . hushing fricatives . . . The critic is not content with saying that the effect of a given passage in a poem is, say, ominous. He thinks that his statement will gain in validity and persuasiveness if he can support it by the 'evidence' that it is the 'ominous *u* vowel' which contributes to this effect. Now why should he wish to summon this sort of 'evidence'? Is it because he is implying that here and everywhere in German poetry, or here and everywhere in this particular poet's (Hölderlin's) work, the sound *u* contributes to the effect of ominousness? Formally speaking, this might very well be a correct statement to make, and it might be argued that the critic has found an infallible method for analysing all German poems (or at least all Hölderlin poems) with the sound *u* in them, for they, consequently, will always be ominous in mood; he may, accordingly, be satisfied that he has buttressed his analysis by evidence of a greater comprehensiveness and hence greater validity than the statement 'I think this poem expresses a mood of ominousness' can offer to a sceptical reader. His 'evidence' appears in fact to have the character of a scientific generalization. And I cannot see what other genuine reason could be adduced for making the original statement that the *u* sound contributes to the effect of ominousness (or for any of the other fanciful remarks about sounds) except this appeal to something apparently stable and 'objectively' valid. But I have argued *in vacuo*, without my Text. For the critic makes the reservation that it is 'very dangerous' to 'assign . . . value and significance' to sounds 'apart from their contexts'. Which is also an unexceptionable statement to make, but incompatible with the implication of his systematic use of sound-analysis. Instead of implying, 'Here and everywhere in German poetry—or in Hölderlin's poetry—the sound *u* contributes to the effect of ominousness', he would *like* to imply, 'Here and here only the sound *u* contributes to the effect of ominousness'. But what in fact he does do is this: first, he replaces one particular statement, 'these words have the effect of ominousness', by another particular statement, 'it is the sound *u* which in this context contributes to the effect of ominousness'; secondly, he implies to the reader that the validity of the statement has been enhanced in the same way *as if* 'these words have the effect of ominousness' had been replaced by 'the sound *u*, which, here and everywhere, contributes to the effect of ominousness'; and thirdly, he denies the implication. And these three things he does, not in succession or explicitly, but all at once, tacitly, and in the complex unity of his confusion. Yet the implication he denies is a genuine implication, that is, necessary; neither contingent nor an arbitrary addition of my own to the critic's meaning, for surely it is inherent in the splitting-up of words into sounds that sounds are thought of

as stable units belonging to some abstract system of sounds; and these units (the argument goes on) combine in some mysterious way — touched by the magic wand Context — into particular poetic effects. And all this is done on the false analogies of (at worst) pennies which are thought of as combining into any particular sum of shillings, or (at best) of Universally Fitting size-graded Bolts holding together any particular lot of girders in the Structure of a house. But sounds, for the literary critic, belong to no system; they belong to the poem; and the poem is related to the reader *via* his response, his sensibility, his culture, his analytical or intuitive reason, perhaps his *Weltanschauung* — but not *via* a theory of sounds.

Two possible conclusions offer themselves from this consideration: if this (essentially mechanistic) conception of sounds as stable units and words as particular assemblages of such units is *not* inherent in the systematic sound-analyses indulged in by modern critics, one can only marvel at the tremendous effort they put into their tautology-hunting; for all they then do is to say that 'cat' is spelt 'c-a-t'.¹ If, on the other hand, this conception of sounds as stable units is inherent in such critical practices as I have described, the only issue I can see is a barren muddle.

All that has here been said about sound-analysis applies, with variations, to the exasperatingly stereotyped way in which Stylistic Analysts proceed in every poem to pick out enjambments and 'stress-patterns', their *abba*'s and *abcc*'s — all of which results in an egregious hypostatization of sounds, syllables, words and word-schemes, a hypostatization of entities and units that can have no direct relation to the true aim of literary criticism, which is the apprehension of meaning. And by meaning I mean nothing opposed to form, but the impact of experience upon the loving mind.

It may here be relevant to inquire, in a general way, what is the reason for these excesses, for this hypostatization of parts, which is turning literary criticism into a playground for inferior statisticians,²

¹ It might be objected that sound-analysis is as little a tautology as is the statement 'to steal is wrong'. The latter is not tautologous because it relates a single action to a theory of actions (ethics) which is clearly and self-evidently relevant to that action; the former, by relating a single sound to a system of sounds (which system is clearly irrelevant to that sound as part of a poem) remains a tautology as far as that sound *in the poem* is concerned. Unlike the connection between ethics and action (which is direct and relevant to conduct), the connection between phonology and a poem is obscure and irrelevant to literary criticism.

² It is significant that proper statisticians are not concerned with value-judgments at all, which are an essential aspect of literary criticism; thus G. U. YULE (*Statistical Study of Literary Vocabulary*, Cambridge 1944) the unwitting originator of the statistical approach, was interested not in problems of style but of authorship; the aim of his word-counts was to answer a 'Yes' or 'No' question; not so Yule's followers, Professor Twaddell and his school.

image-hunters,¹ word-pickers,² syllable-counters and uninspired pedants of every kind. The ultimate source is that atomization of experience which we all share. To share a predicament is one thing; to crowd at one and the same exit is another. Stylistic Analysis in its present form takes the easiest and worst way out: it offers the false safety of a pseudo-scientific routine, reflected in the central metaphor of Structure, and thence in the Method, which deals with the whole — a poem — as an assemblage, at best elaborately inter-related, of atomic parts which, when added up, are said to constitute a whole. This mechanistic doctrine is not, of course, something consciously adhered to; like every true ideology it is unstated, simply in the air. And I do not mean that it is presupposed in the practice of everyone who makes use of the auxiliary studies I have enumerated; but the mechanistic doctrine *is* presupposed whenever, through consistent and systematic and exhaustive use, these auxiliaries are elevated into Method.

It need not perhaps be added that an author's aim to establish and buttress the validity of his judgments and enhance their comprehensiveness is shared by every critic worth his salt. But neither is there a royal road to true judgments, nor is there such a thing as a positively given method of making them valid. Comprehensive and generally valid is what the ends should be, and what the means can never be. The only generalization concerning means is the possession of a free and sensitive intelligence, and any designating of means which is more particular than this — or some other, less commonplace — definition, is a forlorn hope. The mechanistic conception of Structuralism, always at the mercy of a runaway metaphor, is no exception to this rule of ends and means; and this is true whether -ists know the -ism they represent or not. And what good insights and true judgments the analyst is capable of, arise in spite of his method, not through and because of it. Watching him produce his abstruse sound analyses one is sometimes reminded of Odysseus tied to his ship's mast to resist the songs of the Syrens; but more often of Don Quixote in the Sierra Morena, when, the better to pay homage to his very distant Dulcinea, but to the critical Sancho's

¹ Thus 28 pages of a recent issue of the *Publications of the Goethe Society* (N.S., XX [1951], 111-38) are taken up by a conscientious enumeration of all the passages in which such words as 'Bild' and 'Wanderer' occur in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.

² As long as it is claimed that this sort of thing:

'ie '(wie die (1), wie die (2), die wiegen (5), Schlaflied (6), wie, fliegen . . . (going on for 24 out of 104 lines of a 'critical' article) has any significant relation to a poem by CLEMENS BRENTANO (*German Life and Letters*, N.S., V [1952], 188-190), that there is any respectable connection between this and the theme of a poem, so long Stylistic Analysis will remain a travesty of the true business of literary criticism.

great perturbation, he castigated himself by turning elaborate somersaults *in naturalibus*.

Metric and sound-analysis is not an isolated phenomenon in this kind of criticism. It goes hand in hand with elaborate examinations of imagery, vocabulary and syntax, the tracking down of fabulous 'key-words', and the designation of genres.¹ Now from all these systematic technical enterprises, even from sound-analysis, some truth about a poem can be gleaned, as long as they are pursued discreetly and unobtrusively, unmethodically and sensitively, in brief intelligently; and it is the virtue of this kind of criticism that it recognizes the value of these auxiliaries. But it is its great failing that it is committed to the mechanistic view to the extent of claiming that a sufficiently wide choice, and a sufficiently prolific and varied use, of such auxiliaries is certain, by its cumulative effect, to produce a complete and adequate piece of literary criticism. It is its absolute failing that, far from being 'critical', it not only provides no corrective against its own excesses, but encourages them by giving its practitioners an illegitimate and misplaced assurance of precision and therefore rightness, an assurance of a kind that is not to be had in the realm of art at all. But for this assurance of (to put it as crudely as the critic would never put it) 'having got the thing taped', of 'talking in concrete facts instead of vague fancies', one wonders whether many of these analysts would have enough in their minds to sustain them through the writing of a whole book. In the event, it is the method — not the poetry — that pushes them along. For all mental enterprises (however dim) have a fascination and a lure of their own, are moved by an inherent force which makes an end of the means and hence obscures the true end; and it is a fascination no less powerful for leading to ends which, as in the present instance, are mechanistic and lifeless. It may well be that of all this the stylistic analyst is not ignorant. But instead of resisting the lure, instead of making the means wholly subsidiary to the true end of literary criticism — which is the communication of major themes, their evaluation, and perhaps also a projective intimation of that additional value in poetry which criticism may never be able fully to articulate — instead of curbing his technical 'skill', he allows it to run its full course, and only *then* adds his thematic generalizations. But this indulgence in technique — which, at the point where it ceases to contribute to an elucidation of the theme, becomes mechanistic — this over-indulgence casts a blight on his generalizations.

The weakness (which I take to be symptomatic) of Mr Prawer's

¹ On the last of these, not only does Mr Prawer's method-ridden mind allow him to include a perfectly horrid poem of Heine's — 'Zwei Ritter' — as representative of something or other, but for some absurd technical reason he actually calls this crude and vulgar doggerel 'true lyric poetry' (152).

generalized judgments — that is, ultimately, his failure as a critic — is manifest at every important point of the book. There are, first, the trite judgments which in fact tally word for word with the standard judgments of average histories of literature, so that one wonders at the dull little mouse that has come out of such a mountain of technicalities: 'Hölderlin . . . never gave way to such yearnings [for annihilation] for more than a second . . .' or 'Klopstock invokes Joy . . . and does this in stanzas . . . whose power and melody are unmatched in earlier German poetry'. (This, incidentally, is also wrong.) The inane judgments ('so right!', 'so inevitable . . .', 'so beautiful . . .', 'how well . . .') are not a matter for comment.

But there is a third kind of final summary and evaluation, which is assigned a special place. And this type of statement, which this book shares with most of the New Criticism, is much more weighty, though I think equally untenable. For at the apex of this criticism, and as a sort of corona to it, we always find some statement to the effect that a poem — a truly great poem — ceases to be a poem, that words cease to be words,¹ and it and they become 'things', physical entities, something 'real' in contradistinction to 'mere words' which, from this vantage point, are felt to be 'unreal'.² No doubt there is a large number of modern poets — Goethe, Hölderlin and Rilke among them — who practise or attempt to convey this exchange of realities in their poetry. And a critical account of this practice is overdue. It might even be said that this very undertaking — the attempt at replacing a humdrum or banal or hostile external

¹ 'Here, we conclude . . . the verse does not describe the stillness of evening, it has become the stillness of evening; the language is evening stillness itself.' (M. E. Wilkinson in *German Life and Letters*, Goethe Number, 1949, 318, author's italics.) For the same notion about the same poem cf. E. STAIGER, *Grundbegriffe der Poetik* (Zurich 1946), 16, 84: 'Der lyrische Dichter leistet nichts . . .' Taken as a metaphor, this is a prosy paraphrase of Goethe's poem; taken literally this is meaningless, because stillness is still. The reason for making such statements reveals (more clearly than the statements themselves) just this feeling of 'unreality' which attaches here to the notion of 'mere' words; the correct alternative is not between words 'describing' things and their 'becoming' things (as is here suggested), but between two distinct and yet interrelated and in themselves equally valid ways of responding to and taking part in the world, i.e., the making of poetry and (say) silent contemplation.

² This note is struck repeatedly in W. KAYSER's *Das sprachliche Kunstwerk* (Berne 1951), e.g., p. 14: 'Da [in a poem] beziehen sich die Bedeutungen nicht mehr auf reale Sachverhalte. Die Sachverhalte haben vielmehr ein seltsam irreales, auf jeden Fall durchaus eigenes Sein, das von dem der Realität durchaus verschieden ist.' It is not surprising that Kayser fails to establish the ontological status of a work of art. But my point is that he need not even try, for an aesthetic theory is not a necessary prerequisite of literary criticism; all a critic has to know is that a poem *qua* poem is a fully valid mode of experience, which needs no support from other modes (e.g., science) for its status as something real. And this remains true even when poetry itself makes a specific issue of the exchange of modes of reality.

reality by an internally secreted language reality — is the hall-mark of what is greatest in modern German poetry. It is indeed possible for a poet like Rilke to aim at creating his own reality by restricting what he considers to be valid in 'external' reality to poetry; it is then that the poem, itself speaking of poetry and seeing in poetry the essence and value of all experience, seems to be approximating to the point where it 'does' what it 'says'. But at the level at which Mr Prawer repeatedly rushes in with his statements about the 'doing' of the poems he examines — 'the very vowel-sounds "say" "Apfel"' — an apple remains an apple and vowel-sounds vowel-sounds. Viewed more adequately, this kind of poetry will be seen to be different from other kinds by virtue of its particular theme, the theme of (as Rilke puts it) 'what is real in the world', and the poetry of which the poem itself speaks will appear as a particular symbol or emblem of that quest for the real. But whatever the issue of this kind of poetry, its ontological status (the not necessarily explicit premiss of the critic's work) will remain unaffected. In other words, the critic must still look at it as poetry, which is distinct from other kinds of experience.

The weakness of our analyst's judgments is not, I think, accidental, but closely connected with the critical method he uses, or rather is used by, when he sits down to 'read' a poem. Pursued to such lengths as he pursues it, the method of Stylistic Analysis shifts the centre of the critical activity to some point outside the confines of the poem, into grammar, semantics, phonetics, or to an arbitrary combination of these and allied partial studies of language. He has arrived at a point where technicalities cease to be auxiliary and where they become governed by mechanistic laws of their own. At this point judgments and grounds are disconnected. And henceforth the analyst is in no better position to make true judgments than almost any outsider. If anything he is worse off, because, unlike the prefatorial 'inquiring layman', he has the feeling and the assurance that he has been through the wood, while in reality he has merely notched and counted the trees.

My conclusion, then, is that when systematically pursued, Stylistic Analysis disables a critic from accomplishing his true task, which I take to be an intelligent generalization of poem into theme, and thence the relating of theme to experience; an activity accompanied at every stage by judgment. Now what I have in mind is obvious enough; yet to dilate on the commonplace is not always redundant.

2

Literary criticism is perhaps best compared to a skilled craft. First, it is not quite an art, and its attempts at being an art are rhapsodic embarrassments in stucco metaphor. Secondly, it is most

emphatically not a science, not even a 'Wissenschaft', and its appeals to objectiveness on behalf either of itself or of literature are at best irrelevant and at worst grossly misleading, for such appeals (like the notion of 'mere words' parading as things) issue from a system of values fundamentally at odds with the values by which poetry lives. Such appeals (and the converse indictments of 'subjectiveness') spring from an underlying distrust of one man's vision of the world, and from a faith in the scientific manner of thought (i.e. 'scientism') as something more 'valid' than any other manner of thought. Indeed, where all is, ultimately, a question of quality, the appeal to the subjective-objective distinction is as irrelevant to the critic as it would be to a tailor. Literary criticism is not, thirdly, a technique, for it must cut every coat according to its cloth, and there are no machines. Like every true craft it can be partly learned, though most of it remains a matter of talent and patience. Like every craft it has about it something absolute (before we decide whether a coat is a good coat we must be sure it is really a coat) and beyond this an element of relative achievement (there are good coats and bad); but there is no warranty that every man, when put to it, can learn to be a good tailor. It has its uses in season, but they are restricted; in brief, it is not a pursuit that will stand by us in the hour of our greatest need, and to overstrain it is to corrupt it. It has a 'method',¹ but to state it is either to wander off into commonplace generalizations or to give a detailed post-eventual account of how one specific piece of literary criticism came into being. Each time the achievement is determined by an exchange between the work of art and the critic's live intelligence, but the achievement is indeterminable by *a priori* rules of procedure. The present inclination towards criticism of an author's language seems the most appropriate to our present situation, and perhaps it is altogether more fruitful than other kinds of criticism; certainly it corresponds closely to the language-consciousness of modern poetry. But it is also the most exacting kind of criticism, for it aims at elucidating the most intimate aspect of the creative process, and demands the

¹ Attempts at generalized theoretical statements on the method of literary criticism are frequent enough; cf. K. VIÉTOR's 'Probleme der literarischen Gattungsgeschichte' (*D. Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft*, IV [1931], 438ff, and E. ERMATINGER's reply in 'Das Gesetz in der Literaturwissenschaft' (*Philosophie der Literaturwissenschaft*, Berlin 1931, 331ff). These essays, and others to which they refer (especially W. DILTHEY's *Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik*, in *Schriften*, Leipzig, 1928ff, V, 330) fail to make the point, which I take to be of cardinal importance, that to provide such a theory is the business not of literary criticism but of philosophy. This point is made very clearly and convincingly in F. R. LEAVIS's reply in *Scrutiny* (VI [1937], i, 59ff) to R. WELLEK's demand for a theoretical statement (ib. V [1937], iv, 376ff). There also the peculiarly distorting effect of statements about 'your "norm" with which you measure every poet' (v, 376 and vi, 61) is shown at work in practical criticism.

greatest possible closeness to the work of art.¹ In other words, it leaves less room for ineptness, pedantry and technique than biography or history of literature; and less room also for independent construction than where literature is taken as the material of philosophy or of a history of ideas. Such language criticism is, however, open to a baneful misunderstanding; the 'language' it is engaged in criticizing is *not* language as the grammarian, or the philologist, or the statistician understands it. It is nothing partial, abstracted or specialized. Language as the writer (and hence his critic) understands it is live experience; therefore its criticism is either a criticism of experience or else piddling pedantry. In literature, articulated experience crystallizes into meaning; bearing in mind the variety of experience, we may say that literary criticism draws meaning together into themes. To discover, elucidate and define such a theme; to show in detail the particular manner of its sounding; to relate directly all imagery, syntax, general grammar, and all questions of semantics to this theme; to show its greatness and perhaps its limitations; to show the vigour and purposefulness of a poet's vision of his theme, and his comprehensive exploration of it; and to relate *it* in turn to the rest of experience and thus show it as an enrichment of the whole — this if anything is the task of literary criticism.

A simple instance of all this would be a critical account of Hölderlin's 'Der Abschied'. Such an account would have to show how every word and every thought in the poem bodies forth the theme of parting, how every path leads to the centre, how all experience is focused in a realization of what such a parting means, here and perhaps also in a world beyond. The issues here are not 'revolt against a betrayal', or a description of 'the world in which the lovers live', or an account of 'the isolation of the individual, and especially of the poet, in the modern world,' or a criticism of 'the world's worship', or a transposition of 'the lovers [as being] at the same time Judas and Christ'; 'the poet's personal tragedy' has not 'become the tragedy of his age', 'of a generation' and so forth.² Some of these are indeed correct interpretations, while others are read into the poem rather than read out of it. But in any event, all these thoughts (as well as that of a *revoir*, perhaps here or perhaps beyond³) are subsidiary to the main theme of parting, and to fail

¹ Hence to 'deal with' the works of some twenty major poets in the manner of language criticism may well be only possible after a life-time's acquaintance with these works, unless one knows what to look for before having seen the poems.

² S. S. PRAWER, *op. cit.*, 94-97.

³ To this question of immanence or transcendence the second version of this poem gives a different answer from the first and third; my point is that however important this question may be from a religious or philosophical point of view,

to relate them to that theme, which is great enough to embody them all, is to fail to elucidate the poem.

The criticism of language which we have in mind is based on a certain assumption¹ which may be formulated in the following manner: any significant passage in the work of an author may be seen to contain *in nuce* a reflection of the whole work, and hence an analysis and critical account of such a passage will yield an insight into the whole; or again, to understand fully a specific trait and characteristic detail of an author's manner of writing is to understand the whole of that work. This assumption is both true and false. It is false if the passage is chosen at random or according to some premeditated scheme, for whether or not it contains the significant detail the critic has, under such circumstances, no means of discovering and verifying what is significant. The assumption is true when the choice of such a passage is determined by the critic's comprehensive knowledge of his author's work, by his close acquaintance with all other manifestations of what he gradually comes to perceive as the significant theme. And this aspect of the criticism we are considering must be stressed at a time when writers believe that they are able to say something important about a given poem from knowing only that poem, when it is commonly assumed that language criticism offers some short-cut to true judgments. By relying in our analysis on a knowledge of one poem only we must fail to apprehend that poem. To say this is not to assail the splendid self-containedness of poetry, except in so far as it is self-evident that the poem, though unique, partakes, first, of all language, and secondly, of the language of its author; and how is one to learn a language except by practising it in as many contexts as will offer themselves?

Another way of looking at the critic's task is to describe the sort of language he will use. He cannot attempt to imitate the language of the original without incurring the charge of being himself a poet *manqué*. He will try to avoid all impressionistic effects; words like 'somehow' or 'in a mysterious way' express an abdication from his task, for what we expect of him is precisely an answer to the question, 'how is a theme poetically realized?' But he will also beware of opposing to the language of the poem a language of abstractness and technicalities, he will try his best to avoid such shock-effects as the interruption of a sensitive and well-balanced analytical passage by

¹ 'When a part so ptee does duty for the holos we soon grow to use of an allforabit' (JAMES JOYCE, *Finnegans Wake*, London 1939, 18-19); cf. also the late NICOLAI HARTMANN's 'Das Aesthetische verrät sich in allem, was es tut', the central maxim of his lectures on aesthetics.

as far as the poetry is concerned the answer must in either case be related to the main theme, which will be modified, but not displaced, by it.

an exhortation to consider, say, the poet's use of the subjective. He cannot content himself with the bathos of paraphrase,¹ if only because the language available to literary criticism is narrower and more compact than the language of poetry, though it must never become as narrow as that of grammar or semantics; and its metaphors (unlike the metaphors of poetry) will remain ancillary, they will remain explanatory rather than creative of meaning. But although it is narrower and more compact than the language of poetry, the language of literary criticism still belongs to common discourse, it is emphatically not 'eine wissenschaftliche Fachsprache'. Like common discourse, the language of criticism will from time to time harden into a special term, and it may narrow down the meaning of a common word by explicit definition; above all, it will reclaim as its own certain words like 'lyrical' or 'tragic' or 'epic', and in using them it will be justified in making more precise and compact the meaning that the prophets of the market-place have attached to them. But such a narrowing down of meaning may be informed by one purpose only: that of making the terms elucidate the theme, and of relating the theme to experience.

While most of the time the critic is but a purveyor of second-hand sunshine (for the themes he has singled out were first articulated by the poet), in the interrelating of these themes, that is, in his recognition of similarities which is neither necessarily identical with the poet's recognition nor necessarily different from it, lies the critic's own brief moment of glory.

This raises, but also answers, I think, the question of intended meaning. The literary critic has to do with what an author 'really said', not with what he 'really meant'. On certain occasions (which are much less frequent than the New Criticism takes them to be) that which an author 'really said' may be seen to convey a meaning additional to that which, we suspect, the author is likely to have had in mind. In a general way we may say that where our suspicion (that our meaning is wider than what the author 'really meant') is based upon internal evidence offered by the work as a whole, there (obviously) the additional meaning (an understanding of what the poet 'really said') will disrupt the unity of that whole, and must therefore be rejected. Where, on the other hand, the additional meaning is contradicted by external evidence only, we may enlarge on it and establish it as valid, even at the risk of being told that we pretend to know better than the author what he was about. And we shall defend our case by pointing to the nature of language, whose growth gives new meanings to old words, and garners new exper-

¹ 'The poem opens in two parallel lines in which the speaker asks the hearer if he/she hears the murmur of the fountain and the cricket's chirp. . . ' (*German Life and Letters*, N.S. V., 1952, 189).

iences in old images; by pointing, in particular, to poetic language, whose greatness lies often (though by no means always) in its capacity for being related and in its quality of being relevant to situations different from the situation expressed or intimated in the poem itself. Where his additional meaning is more comprehensive and general than the old meaning (which was simple, and, from the new point of view, narrow), there the critic's task will be twofold: he will not only have to make the additional meaning he has uncovered convincing and valid, but he must also see to it that the simple and narrow meaning is kept alive in its own particular way, that it is not buried under generalities; in other words, he must share, and perhaps give voice to, the poet's trust that the particular contains, or rather is an emblem of, the universal, and yet lives on as a particular. Here again method and ineptness open many pitfalls. Method — for present-day critics are apt to brush aside the ostensible meaning, and will not rest content until they have found another; and ineptness — manifest in the faulty relating of the new meaning to the old context, or, more frequently, in making the new meaning replace the old, whereas it may only complement it and add to it.

In all this, convincingness, coherence and the fruitfulness of the insight — vouchsafed by his effort — into the whole of experience are the only criteria to apply to the critic's work; these in fact are the hallmarks of his truth. The insight we expect of him must make us turn back to the poetry he has expounded, it must make us see it more clearly, more fully, and more nearly as a whole. The insight we expect him to give us must spring from a full response of his trained faculties of perceiving and judging. He can do no more than that; if he does less he does very little indeed for literature or for its readers.

When all this, and perhaps much more in a similar vein, is said and done we shall still have to listen to the sceptic's misgivings about this whole enterprise. As likely as not he will be speaking to us not from outside, but from within our own mind. Really? he will be saying, Do you really think that anything very relevant and worthwhile can be said about poetry in this elaborate fashion, through this complex activity of discriminating and rationalizing? Do you really think that anything worthwhile can be *said* about poetry at all? Why not be content with an immediate, intuitive apprehension, why for ever articulate? I *know* a good poem when I see one, the inward sceptic will continue, I *feel* it to be good, and that is all there is to it. And I also know that my own apprehension of poetry is surer and better than yours, for all your elaborate designating of themes and entities of experience.

All this may indeed be true, even though any sceptic who would wish to formulate the intuitive grounds of his objection at all closely

would find himself in a paradoxical position. But it is also largely beside the point. The possession of an initial gift for the task is not disputed. Whether such a gift is intuitive or not, need not concern us here; it certainly becomes part of a discursive and reasonable process the moment a critic applies himself to his true task, which is different from that of his sceptical and intuitive interlocutor. For better or for worse the critic's task is the generalizing and communicating of the experience that reposes in and is poetry. To communicate is to make valid, first to oneself, then to others of a like disposition. The critic's statements may aim at and yet never reach any very wide audience; nor, for that matter, does poetry. And this, unless its cause lie in the obscurity or eccentricity of his view, is not a problem to him. But here, as in all discourse, his axiom will be the common intelligibility of reasonable grounds. For him, the irrational will be a meaningless and mute void, and the imagination a faculty not different from reason but springing from it and a part of it — quicker, finer and more sensuous than the working of analytical reason, but at one with it in all essentials. And the better he accomplishes his task the more successful he will be in intimating that element in poetry which he may find himself unable to draw into non-poetic, prosy discourse.

JAMES MILL AND THE POLITICAL EDUCATION OF RICARDO

T. W. HUTCHISON

1

MR SRAFFA'S superb new edition of Ricardo's Correspondence contains as one of its main discoveries, now published for the first time, a series of 107 letters between James Mill and Ricardo written between 1811 and 1823. These letters deal very little with problems of political economy or economic theory, with which Mill was for a considerable part of this period quite out of touch: ('For a good many years I have not been able to think of it', 9/11/1815). The main interest of the Mill-Ricardo Correspondence is rather that of a case-book document in intellectual psychology and political philosophizing. We have here, in detail, the story—the rough outline of which has long been known—of the triumphantly successful twofold plan which James Mill brought off for and through Ricardo: of how he got the modest, unlettered paterfamilias and wealthy retired-stockbroker-turned-country-gentleman, first to publish to the world a treatise on the *Principles of Political Economy*, and then, following up the written with the spoken message, how he pushed the still reluctant Ricardo into Parliament to proclaim the new politico-economic doctrines from the stage of the House of Commons. For the first part of the project Mill acts as an impatient professorial supervisor, admonishing, encouraging, cajoling, and bullying his gifted but inarticulate pupil through the labours and torments of large-scale literary composition. Then, as a preparation for his Parliamentary career, Mill puts Ricardo through a rapid and wonderfully confident correspondence course in what he describes as 'the science of legislation'—(an exact science as Mill presents it).

In addition to the details of a remarkable intellectual relationship between two influential thinkers, these letters give us much that may be revealing about the political ideas of the philosophic radicals and the Ricardian political economists. From 1819, once Mill has realized his twofold ambitions for (or through) Ricardo, he relaxes considerably and many of his later letters are devoted mainly to political and family gossip.

Whatever may be thought of the directions in which Mill influenced Ricardo and his career, and of the political and philosophical principles which he sought so vigorously to instil in his much less sophisticated friend, it is impossible not to respect the warmth and affection they had for one another. Ricardo drew out the least

forbidding side of Mill, and, as it seems to us, they were much closer to one another personally as well as intellectually than were Ricardo and Malthus. Partly it was a case of the attraction of opposites. As a writer Ricardo always felt himself something of an amateur, at any rate outside the narrower field of monetary and banking problems, and he admired the strenuous professional intellectual (or 'hackneyed stager' as Mill called himself), who wielded such a fluent and incisive pen on any subject from India to Education.¹ Mill, on the other hand, respected the practical, successful, financial acumen and expertize of Ricardo. But it was not contrasts but close intellectual affinities which made possible their partnership, and which made Ricardo such a 'natural' for Mill's great project or promotion.²

According to Halévy, the acquaintance of Mill and Ricardo dates from 'after 1807', and it seems probably to have begun about a year or two later.³ In any case, the earliest letters here show that they were on terms of close friendship by 1810-11. Down to the middle of 1814, while both were constantly in London, they walked and talked together almost daily, and there are very few letters. In view of the later commanding influence which we can now see Mill exercising in his letters of 1815-18, the question obviously arises as to the part which Mill had in Ricardo's intellectual development in the earlier years of the decade, in particular in the decisive broadening out of Ricardo's economic theorizing from the narrower monetary problems of his early pamphlets, a subject in which he had great

¹ cf. Ricardo to Mill, 18/9/20: 'It is impossible that I should be offended by any offer of a fee which Mr Napier might make me, — nor does my pride stand in the way of my accepting of it, if it is usual for persons who are amateurs, and not worthy to be called authors, to be paid for their articles.'

² A later observer points out precisely that cast of mind in Ricardo which rendered him such a suitable fulfiller of Mill's ambitions: 'He is as the French would express it *herissé de principes*, he meets you upon every subject that he has studied *with a mind made up*, and opinions in the nature of mathematical truths. He spoke of Parliamentary reforms and vote by Ballot as a man who would bring such things about, and destroy the existing system tomorrow, if it were in his power, and without the slightest doubt as to the result. And yet there was not one person at Table, several of them Individuals, whose opinion he highly valued, who would have agreed with him. It is this very quality of the man's mind; his entire disregard of experience and practice, which makes me doubtful of his opinions on political economy' (quoted by Sraffa, *Works of Ricardo*, vol. VIII, p. 152). The only difference between Ricardo and Mill was that Mill would not have 'highly valued' the opinions of those with whom he disagree. Ricardo fully shared Mill's crude 'progressivism': 'He willingly allowed that there was much wisdom in our ancestors: but at the same time he must ever contend, that the present generation had all their wisdom and a little more into the bargain. (Hear, hear) . . . The present generation had invented steam-engines and gaslights . . .' Parliamentary Speech of 9/5/22, v. *Works*, vol. V. p. 178.

³ v. HALEVY, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, p. 266.

first-hand knowledge, and in which he made much use of statistics, to his far more general and overwhelmingly deductive analysis of the laws of distribution, as presented in his *Essay on Profits* (1815), the embryo of his *Principles*. Halévy has said (op. cit. p. 272) very plausibly, but without actually citing documentary confirmation, that when they were in London together (1811-14) 'Mill during the long walks which he loved to take with Ricardo, was chiefly concerned to give him lessons in method'.

Anyhow, the most celebrated of Ricardo's early monetary writings was, of course, his *Reply to Bosanquet* (1811), a critic of the Bullion Report, over whom he won a flatteringly sweeping victory, partly, at any rate, by catching his opponent out in the use of bungled statistics. Ricardo's triumph over Bosanquet has always been regarded as the perfect demonstration of how the crude and prejudiced rationalizations of the 'practical man' can be demolished by theoretical economic analysis. We simply wish to point out here how Ricardo's performance was especially calculated to appeal to Mill, a favourite section of whose *Commonplace Book* was characteristically devoted to 'Theory or Speculation versus Practice, in which he brings a mass of authorities to check the overweening presumption of the "practical" man.'¹ Ricardo denounces Bosanquet in a manner fully worthy of Mill, as the 'man who is all for fact and nothing for theory', and condemns those who 'hardly ever sift their facts', who 'are credulous, and necessarily so, because

¹ V. BAIN, *James Mill*, p. 465. Ricardo's reply to Bosanquet is described by McCulloch as 'the best controversial essay that has ever appeared on any disputed question of Political Economy...' and as 'a striking example of the ascendancy which those who possess a knowledge both of principle and practice have over those who are familiar only with the latter' (*The Literature of Political Economy*, pp. 184-5). Professor Sayers, however, has recently pointed out that the sweeping triumph of Ricardo was by no means an unqualified gain for nineteenth-century monetary theory, as the good things in many of Bosanquet's arguments tended to be overlooked (*Quarterly Journal of Economics*, February 1953, pp. 30ff). Prof. Sayers asserts that many of Ricardo's monetary doctrines were permeated and vitiated by the assumption 'of instantaneous adjustment to a long-run equilibrium' and concludes: 'That he whose influence both on monetary thought and on policy was destined to be so powerful should have taken this simple Quantity Theory view was a major disaster.' In view of Mill's later complete and immediate acceptance of the main Ricardian doctrines it is interesting to find him in 1806 firmly supporting Stuart's criticism of 'the simple Quantity Theory view' when he refers to 'that position which lays the foundation of Mr Thornton's late work on Paper Credit, "That the prices of Commodities are always proportional to the plenty of money in the country; so that the augmentation even of paper money, affects the state of prices in proportion to its quantity."' This doctrine Sir James Stuart exposes... and establishes such principles as entirely subvert the very erroneous speculations of Mr Thornton, and the equally erroneous speculations of many others, who since the publication of his book have had so much to say upon that subject'. This is about the only point on which Mill agreed with Stuart: see *Literary Journal*, 1806, pp. 225ff.

they have no standard of reference'. It is difficult to suppress the conjecture that possibly those Millian 'lessons in method' which Halévy apparently rather speculatively mentions, may already have been influencing their pupil as early as 1810. But there is no firm evidence for this in these letters, nor, as it seems, elsewhere. Exactly how far Ricardo was *born*, and how far, from the earliest stages of his career as a writer on political economy, he was *fashioned* (by Mill) as the suitable intellectual partner or instrument for Mill's projects, is bound to remain doubtful. But these new letters do broadly confirm such conclusions of Halévy as that Mill 'intended to make of Ricardo the Quesnay of nineteenth-century England'; that Mill 'did not so much give him a doctrine as develop in him the doctrinal leaning and make him a doctrinaire'; and that, as with Bentham, if Mill 'was ambitious, it was for Bentham [sc. Ricardo] not for himself . . . he had found a great man, *his* great man, and he set it before himself to give [him] an influence in his own time and in his own country' (v. Halévy, op. cit., pp. 273, 282 and 307).

2

The opening letter of Mill's campaign, and the first between him and Ricardo for nearly a year, was that written on August 23rd, 1815. Before that, there had been only a few miscellaneous exchanges in 1810-11, and four letters, all from Mill, in 1814. There is no suggestion that Mill is taking up a subject they had previously discussed together face to face. Mill expresses the hope that now Ricardo has 'made quite as much money for all your family, as will be conducive to their happiness', he will have leisure for 'other pursuits' and first of all for the science of Political Economy. For Mill explains that he is satisfied 'that you can improve so important a science far more than any other man who is devoting his attention to it, or likely to do so for Lord knows how many years . . . I have other projects upon you, however, besides. You now can have no excuse for not going into Parliament, and doing what you can to improve that most imperfect instrument of government'. Ricardo will find the problems of politics extremely simple, once he turns his mind to them: 'There is not much difficulty in finding out the principles on which alone good government must of necessity depend; and when all this is as clearly in that head of yours, as that head knows how to put it, the utility in Parliament, of even you, in spite of all your modesty, would be very great.' It is especially desirable for Ricardo to enter Parliament, since, as Mill in a characteristic generalization puts it: 'I do question whether another man would be found in it, not ready to sell his country . . . to such a degree by the operation of the bad principles of our government, are the intellectual

and moral parts of the mind among the leading orders corrupted and depraved.'

Ricardo's prompt reply (30/8/15) is thoroughly sensible and moderate. He undertakes, with much diffidence, that as regards writing a work on Political Economy 'the experiment shall ... be tried'. But 'your other project—your Parliamentary scheme is above all others unfit for me,—my inclination does not in the least point that way'. And as for Mill's sweeping strictures on the honesty of the present Parliament: 'On this subject you are, as I have often thought you, unjustly severe.' When Mill again emphasizes (10/10/15) the 'insatiable unprincipled desire to live at the expense of the public, to plunder the people for money', on the part of politicians and Members of Parliament, Ricardo replies (24/10/15): 'It appears to me that you allow too much force to the principle of money.'

However, for the time being, Mill drops the subject of Parliament; for his first main task is to urge Ricardo on with his treatise on Political Economy. In his next letter (9/11/15) Mill writes: 'As I am accustomed to wield the authority of a school-master, I therefore, in the genuine exercise of this honourable capacity, lay upon you my commands to begin to the first of the three heads of your proposed work, rent, profit, wages,—viz. rent, without an hour's delay. If you entrust the inspection of it to me, depend upon it I shall compel you to make it all right before you have done with it.' Soon Mill is explaining to Ricardo how a treatise on the principles of Political Economy should be set out, that is, like a text book of geometry, an analogy which Mill had suggested in previous writings: 'Never set down any material proposition without its immediate proof, or a reference to the very page where the proof is given ... On this subject [improvements in cultivation], I ordain you to perform an exercise ... My meaning is that you should successively answer the question, what comes next? First of all is the improvement. What comes next? Ans. The increase of produce. What comes next? Ans. a fall in the price of corn. What comes next?—and so on' (22/12/15). Mill breaks off at the difficult point of the analysis, but his suggestions are methodologically typical, and Ricardian economic theorizing is in the main conceived after this pattern.

At length, after some further robust encouragement from Mill, Ricardo sends him the draft of a large part of the *Principles* (October, 1816). Mill's impression of the work is absolutely clear-cut: 'I think you have made out all your points. There is not a single proposition the proof of which I think is not irresistible' (18/11/16). A month later, having examined some further chapters by Ricardo, Mill writes: 'Your doctrines are original and profound. I have no hesitation whatsoever in saying that they are fully and completely made out. I embrace every one of them; and am ready to defend them against

all the world' (16/12/16). Mill hardly raises one single point of doubt or difficulty.

It may indeed be said that whatever else can be claimed for Ricardo's *Principles*, certainly they possess 'originality and profundity'. They certainly represented a big new departure from previous conceptions of the scope and method of Political Economy, as represented in the writings of British economists. But only a year before, Mill had confessed that 'notwithstanding my passion for the science of Political Economy, it has so happened that for a good many years I have not been able to think of it' (except through Ricardo's writings or conversation). Of course, Mill wanted to encourage the diffident Ricardo. But his immediate and complete adoption of Ricardo's new doctrines, in the exposition of which subsequent economists, even the most enthusiastic, have found serious deficiencies, was almost certainly perfectly sincere. It can only be explained by the fact that Mill saw Ricardo to be applying exactly the same method and the corresponding assumptions, which he himself was to employ shortly after in his *Essay on Government*; (or, at any rate, any other explanation must be far more unfavourable to Mill). He regarded such a method and such assumptions as absolutely guaranteeing the soundness and fully justifying his unquestioning acceptance of Ricardo's new doctrines, on a subject to which he had for some years had no opportunity of giving any independent thought at all.

With the *Principles* published, Mill in due course returns to his Parliamentary ambitions for Ricardo, whose reply however includes the following remarkable account of himself:

I am fully convinced that you very far overrate the powers of my mind. It would be misplaced modesty in such a case as the present to speak of myself otherwise than I think I deserve, and therefore I am to be believed when I conscientiously declare that I think your opinion of my capabilities far too high. In the first place I am not very persevering, unless the object for which I work is steadily before my eyes. — I have all the disadvantages too of a neglected education, which it is now in vain to seek to repair. It would be wise in me to stop where I am, and not like a desperate gamester venture my gains to the fearful odds to which they are exposed. My mind often misgives me about the Parliamentary scheme, and I think if you knew me as well as I know myself you would advise me against it. In my intercourse with you I have always armed myself with my Political Economy, a subject on which I have thought a good deal, and in which you are very much disposed to magnify my success — You have formed your general opinion from a partial view. Tell me

however what to undertake and I will put my powers to the test but do not be surprised if I should hereafter come to you and say that the burden is greater than I can carry (12/9/17).

Mill (19/10/17) concedes that for the moment Ricardo may take a short rest, but that he will really have to get started on his political education when Mill's forthcoming book (*The History of British India*) is available:

I am now very much in the mind to give you nothing to do, till you get my own book to read. No, no; I will not fill your head with other things, when I shall desire to have it presently all applied to one thing. To be serious, however, that book of mine, if it answers my expectation, or rather my wish, will make no bad introduction to the study of civil society in general. The subject afforded an opportunity of laying open the principles and laws of the social order in almost all its more remarkable states, from the most rude to the most perfect with which we are yet acquainted; and if I have been capable of explaining them, will be of some help to you, in exploring what I wish to see you thoroughly acquainted with, the course which human affairs, upon the great scale, have hitherto taken, the causes of their taking these different courses, the degree in which these courses have severally departed from the best course, and by what means they can best be made to approximate to that course. That is the field of application; and none of the pretexts you set up will avail you. There is nothing in this knowledge mysterious, or hard — there is nothing but what anybody, who has common application, a common share of judgement, and is free from prejudice, and sinister interest, may arrive at.

In fact, in Mill's eyes, Ricardo at this point seems to begin to bear some significant resemblance to Martin Luther:

All great changes in society, are easily effected when the time is come. Was it not an individual, without fortune, without name, and in fact without talents, who produced the Reformation? Before I have done with you you will reason less timidly on this subject because you will know more certainly.

Ricardo in reply (9/11/17) expresses an eager interest at the prospect of Mill's great work on the laws and progress of society:

I am eager for information on the causes which are constantly obstructing man in the rational pursuit of his own happiness. Legislation would be comparatively an easy science if it were not so much influenced by the characters and dispositions of the people for whom it is to be undertaken.

Perhaps we can detect in this wistful remark Ricardo's hankering after a simplified political 'model', or one of those 'strong cases', by means of which he could deal with the political world and enunciate impressively sweeping pronouncements 'in the nature of mathematical truths', by the method he had applied in Political Economy.

However, as it appears to him, the science of legislation seems to be beset with many complicating difficulties:

Legislation then becomes a most difficult science, for first you have to study the objects which ought to be attained to promote the general happiness, and then the nature of the materials on which you have to act for the attainment of that end . . . 'Great changes in society may be effected, when the time is come, by comparatively insignificant means', — but the difficulty in such a question is to decide, first, whether the change be itself desirable, and secondly, whether the time be come. These are the points that would puzzle me, and would make me determined to advance very cautiously. If you will assist me, as you promise, to get such a knowledge of these matters as shall enable me to come to satisfactory conclusions, you will be doing me essential service.

Mill (3/12/17), however, is perfectly confident of his ability to deal with Ricardo's doubts and difficulties:

I have no doubt about removing all your difficulties; and showing you that instead of being a science, the practical results of which must always be uncertain, rendering it always prudent to try to remain in the state we are in, rather than venture the unknown effects of a change, legislation is essentially a science the effects of which may be computed with an extraordinary degree of certainty; and the friends of human nature cannot proceed with too much energy in beating down every obstacle which opposes the progress of human welfare.

At last, Ricardo gets his copy of the *History* (18/12/17): 'The long-desired book has at length arrived.' For Ricardo, it comes as a revelation:

If I before had had doubts of what legislation might do, to improve society, I should have none after reading what I have read of your book . . . My plea for caution and timidity was ignorance . . . Legislation may not be so difficult as I imagine, — I wish it may not be, for I am anxiously disposed to understand it. One of the great difficulties of the science appears to me to be that . . . of the government and laws of one state of society being often very ill adapted for another state of society.

We must linger for a moment over Mill's *History of British India*, if only to deplore the very small attention paid to this remarkable work in studies of philosophic radicalism and of the politics of classical political economy.¹ Leslie Stephen gives us no idea of it, while Halévy's hints, though penetrating and important, are all too brief. But John Stuart Mill described his father's great work as 'one of the most instructive histories ever written, and one of the books from which most benefit may be derived by a mind in the course of making up its opinions. The Preface, among the most characteristic of my father's writings, as well as the richest in materials of thought, gives a picture which may be entirely depended on, of the sentiments and expectations with which he wrote the History'.²

The vast labours of research devoted by Mill to the historical narrative, which makes up a large part of the *History*, made it for many decades an indispensable authority.³ But Book II of the work

¹ There is now the very valuable article by DUNCAN FORBES on 'James Mill and India' in *Cambridge Journal*, October 1951, pp. 19ff. Mr Forbes describes Mill's *History* as 'a good and perennially useful example of the influence on the minds of administrators and politicians of half-baked "philosophical" history'. Mr. Forbes further points out that 'it is clear that Mill's method in the *History of India* was really deductive, as in the *Essay on Government* in which the "experience test" is purposely rejected, as also in the abstract political economy of Ricardo'. Mr Forbes incidentally mentions the remarkable episode of the utilitarian Governor-General Bentinck (who was also responsible for a number of admirable reforms) who seriously proposed to demolish the Taj Mahal in order to auction its marble. He was only diverted because the test auction of materials from Agra Palace proved unsatisfactory. Bentinck had written to Bentham: 'I am going to British India, but I shall not be Governor-General. It is you who will be Governor-General.' Bentinck also had a very high regard for Mill's advice (v. Bain, op. cit., pp. 324, 327, and 367). It would be interesting to know if Mill, who was by then a powerful figure at India House, played any part in this incident. Anyhow, Coleridge may have spoken with more accuracy than he realized when he exclaimed against a contemporary tendency in political economy: 'It would dig up the charcoal foundations of the temple at Ephesus to burn as fuel for a steam engine' *Table Talk*, 24/6/34.

² v. *Autobiography*, World's Classics ed., p. 21.

³ MILL's *History* was edited and continued by H. H. Wilson, F.R.S., Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford (and it is his edition, published in 1858, a year after the Mutiny, that we have used). Wilson worked on Mill's *History* because he regarded it as 'the most valuable work upon the subject which has yet been published', but he nevertheless considered it necessary to criticize Mill's judgments on Hindu civilization in extraordinarily severe terms: 'He has elaborated a portrait of the Hindus which has no resemblance to the original and which almost outrages humanity . . . The *History of British India* is open to censure for its obvious unfairness and injustice; but in the effects which it is likely to exercise upon the connection between the people of England and the people of India, it is chargeable with more than literary demerit: its tendency is evil; it is calculated to destroy all sympathy between the rulers and the ruled; to preoccupy the minds of those who issue annually from Great Britain, to monopolise the posts of honour and power in Hindustan, with an unfounded aversion towards those over whom they exercise that power, and from whom they enforce that honour; and

is concerned, as Mill had informed Ricardo, with determining 'laws of society', 'laws of human nature', 'stages of social progress', 'steps' in 'the progress of civilization', and in particular with the place of the Hindus in the 'scale of civilization'. Mill had, of course, never been further East than, let us say, perhaps, Southend, and hardly knew a word of any Oriental language. However, as he explains in his Preface, such merely empirical equipment may well be highly misleading for the historian, and is of far less importance than a grasp of 'the laws of society' and what Mill calls 'a masterly use of evidence'. Anyhow, Mill has no hesitation in pronouncing the most severe, definite, and detailed condemnation of every aspect of Hindu civilization (except perhaps cloth-making) including manners, mathematics, sculpture, laws, painting, science, architecture and religion, and he concludes that the Hindus are at almost the lowest possible level in 'the scale of civilization'.

Ricardo is especially pleased with Mill's treatment of Hindu civilization. He writes off to Say (18/12/17), and to Trower (26/1/18): 'His views on the subjects of Government, Law, Religion, Manners are profound; and his application of these views to the actual, and past state of Hindustan ... cannot, I think, be refuted ... He endeavours to refute the prevailing opinion that the Hindus are now, or ever have been, a highly civilized people ... I am exceedingly pleased with the work.'

Meanwhile, Mill is reassuring Ricardo as to his difficulties about the fitting of legislation to the particular state of society, or position on 'the scale of civilization', to which it is to apply (27/12/17):

On the subject of legislation I have no doubt that we shall now understand one another. Doubtless, the laws which are adapted to an improved state of society, would not be adapted to a state of society much behind. But it will not be difficult when we have a standard of excellence, to determine what is to be done, in all cases. The ends are there, in the first place, known — they are clear and definite. What you have after that to determine is the choice of the means, and under glorious helps for directing the judgement.

to substitute for those generous and benevolent feelings, which the situation of the younger servants of the Company in India naturally suggests, sentiments of disdain, suspicion, and dislike, uncongenial to their age and character, and wholly incompatible with the full and faithful discharge of their obligations to Government and to the people. There is reason to fear that these consequences are not imaginary, and that a harsh and illiberal spirit has of late years prevailed in the conduct and councils of the rising service in India, which owes its origin to impressions imbibed in early life from the *History of Mr Mill* (p. xiii). Chap. 10 of Book II ('General Reflections') summarizes Mill's conclusions. For the economist an interesting item in his *History* is the clear statement of the rationale of progressive rather than proportional taxation — as contrasted with the arguments in J. S. Mill's *Principles* (v. Book II, ch. 8, p. 203).

However, Ricardo's healthy doubts are not completely flattened by Mill's steamroller, and with much native insight he directs attention to a fundamental difficulty in Mill's science of legislation as applied to the government of India. May not the great criterion of utility, or the greatest happiness of the greatest number, be used to justify or even demand, the wholesale imperialistic conquest of the sub-Continent? — (except in so far as the House of Commons at home might find the operation rather expensive):

Are we to fix our eyes steadily on the end, the happiness of the governed, and pursue it at the expense of those principles which all men are agreed in calling virtuous? If so, might not Lord Wellesley, or any other ruler, disregard all the engagements of his predecessors, and by force of arms compel the submission of all the native powers of India if he could show that there was a great probability of adding to the happiness of the people by the introduction of better instruments of government. If he accomplished this end at the expense of much treasure to England, I do not think the plea would be admitted by a British House of Commons, however freely chosen. The difficulty of the doctrine of expediency or utility is to know how to balance one object of utility against another — there being no standard in nature, it must vary with the tastes, the passions and the habits of mankind. This is one of the subjects on which I require to be enlightened (6/1/18).

Unfortunately, there is no record in these letters of the enlightenment which Ricardo requested from Mill.¹ However, Mill continued to reassure his pupil as to 'the plain rule of utility, which will always guide you right, and in which there is no mystery' (23/9/18). We would, however, point out that on another problem of internal policy Mill had previously suggested to Ricardo that though the principle of utility was consistent with obligations between individuals being

¹ It should be noticed that Mill does give a partial answer to Ricardo's question further on in the *History* (vol. VI, p. 286): 'Even where the disparity of civilization and knowledge were very great; and where it was beyond dispute that a civilized country was about to bestow upon a barbarous one the greatest of all possible benefits, a good and beneficent government; even here, it would require the strongest circumstances to justify the employment of violence or force.' But what are 'the strongest circumstances and who is the judge of them? Obviously Mill does not clear up the question of principle as to the implications of the magic formula of utility 'which will always guide you right, and in which there is no mystery'. The formula becomes no plainer when it appears as the criterion of civilization as well as of all action: 'Exactly in proportion as *Utility* is the object of every pursuit may we regard a nation as civilized. Exactly in proportion as its ingenuity is wasted on contemptible and mischievous objects, though it may be, in itself, an ingenuity of no ordinary kind, the nation may safely be denounced barbarous' (vol. II, p. 105).

held sacred, where *states* were concerned it was justifiable to overturn contractual obligations which clashed with the one great over-riding principle: 'There is utility in making bargains between individuals strict, unless where fraud appears to have intervened. There would be utility in holding all bargains between the public and individuals nul, in which the interests of the public are sacrificed' (22/12/15).

On September 23rd, 1818, Mill writes to Ricardo informing him that the financial transaction is now completed and he may forthwith take over his seat in the House of Commons: 'I now reckon that I may congratulate myself on seeing you in Hon. House, where I am sure you will do as much honour to my prognostications, as you have done by your book.' The times are especially auspicious: a great once-and-for-all change is on the way, out of which a kind of classless society will emerge, with national politics no longer dominated by sinister vested interests. In fact, in 1818, 'the last fight' was just about to be 'faced':

... The cause itself is now, by the progress of the human mind, brought into such a situation, that very moderate exertions will produce great results, that every operation will *tell*, because it falls in with the current in which things are running of their own accord ... No high and permanent reputation, will ever again be acquired by merely fighting up the pretensions of one aristocratical party, against another. There will be no great character, hereafter, for any thing else than great service to the cause of causes, the cause of *good government*.

Ricardo is now established as the Parliamentary representative of the twelve constituents of Portarlington, and known as 'the Oracle'. Within three years Mill had achieved his great two-fold plan. He was entitled to feel jubilant: 'You are now beyond all dispute at the head of Political Economy. Does not that gratify your ambition? And who prophesied all this? Tell me that! And scolded you on, coward that you are? Tell me that!' (14/1/19).

The letters of 1819-23 lack the serious over-riding purpose of those from 1815-18. Mill seems to take very little interest (as contrasted with McCulloch) in the main problems of contemporary economic policy, or in those theoretical problems which Ricardo pondered when preparing the later editions of his *Principles*. Ricardo was discussing the most important of these problems with Malthus, and was from time to time deploring Malthus's fallacious methods and conclusions in which he can often see no glimmer of justification: 'Another of his great mistakes is, I think, this; Political Economy, he says, is not a strict science like the mathematics' (to Mill, 1/1/21).

There is, however, one interesting exchange on contemporary

politics between Mill and Ricardo from the year 1821 with which we may conclude. Mill remarks (23/8/21):

... It is very curious that almost every body you meet with — whig and tory — agree in declaring their opinion of one thing — that a great struggle between the two orders, the rich and poor, is in this country commenced — and that the people must in the end prevail; — and yet that the class of the rich act as if they were perfectly sure of the contrary — for if the people must gain the victory, but are made to suffer intensely in the gaining of it, what can these people mean who would enrage the victors to the utmost? The old adage seems to be true; that when God wants to destroy a set of men, he first makes them mad.

Ricardo replies (28/8/21) with a less pessimistic view as to the political wisdom of the English governing class, a view which Marx himself was later to recognize as an arguable one:

The only prospect we have of putting aside the struggle which they say has commenced between the rich and the other classes, is for the rich to yield what is justly due to the other classes, but this is the last measure which they are willing to have recourse to. I cannot help flattering myself that justice will prevail at last, without a recurrence to actual violence; but if it does, it will only be because the event of the struggle will be so obvious to all eyes that expediency, the expediency of the rich, will make it necessary even in their view.

3

It is clear that Ricardo did not immediately, and to the full, accept all the more extreme aspects and implications of the ideas with which Mill was seeking to indoctrinate him, though he hardly had the equipment or inclination to put up any sustained, systematic resistance. Certainly much of Ricardo's record of votes and speeches in Parliament is easily defensible, though more so, it may be suggested, on more strictly political issues than on those of economic policy, where the authority of the new science of Political Economy was invoked. He was known in the House as 'an ultra-reformer and visionary on commercial subjects', and generally as 'the most decided and thorough Reformer within the walls of Parliament'. Nevertheless, to the large extent to which Ricardo undoubtedly did come to share James Mill's political and philosophic presuppositions they must have fostered a certain excessive, blinkered, confidence in his pronouncements on economic policy, and must have encouraged rather than dissuaded him from those unqualified and oversimplified generalizations about economic processes, to which in the name of the new science, he was apt to resort. After all, when Mill told him of

'the extraordinary degree of certainty' with which the effects of legislation could be calculated, this obviously applied to economic policy. Such a point of view clearly inspires the sort of confident doctrines about the effects of machinery, of public works during depressions, of free trade in corn, and of population changes and wage-policy, which Ricardo enunciated in his speeches and letters.¹ Unfortunately there was no one of comparable public influence to do, in a rough and ready way, for the Millian-Ricardian method in political economy what Macaulay in his famous 'Edinburgh' article (1829) did with such brilliance and effect for Mill's *Essay on Government* (which gives us, according to Leslie Stephen, 'the very essence of Utilitarian politics . . . chiefly remarkable for a simple-minded audacity').² John Stuart Mill agreed that Macaulay's article, 'gave much to think about' and held, surely with some *naïveté*, that his father ought to have justified himself 'by saying "I was not writing a scientific treatise on politics, I was writing an argument for parliamentary reform"'. Some modern champions of the Ricardian and other classical economists do make out a defence along these lines: that is, that the 'classical' doctrines did provide a body of useful practical maxims, or an economic ideology, 'right' and valuable for the times. This seems to be at least a less unsound line of defence

¹ e.g., RICARDO ON (a) *machinery*: 'It could not be denied, on the whole view of the subject, that machinery did not lessen the demand for labour . . . It might also be misapplied by occasioning the production of too much cotton, or too much cloth; but *the moment* those articles ceased in consequence to pay the manufacturer, he would devote his time and capital to some other purpose' (*Works*, vol. V, p. 30. Parliamentary Speech of 16/12/19, italics added). Two or three years later Ricardo radically changed his views on this subject.

(b) On *public works*: 'When he heard honourable members talk of employing capital in the formation of roads and canals, they appeared to overlook the fact that the capital thus employed must be withdrawn from some other quarter' (*Works*, vol. V, p. 32. Parliamentary Speech of 16/12/19).

(c) On *free trade in corn*: 'The attention of the House had been called to the terrible effects which would be produced upon native agriculture, by allowing a free importation of cheap corn from the Continent. He would endeavour to show what would be the real effect. The prices of corn would be reduced immediately, and agriculture might be distressed more than at present. But *the labour of this country would be immediately applied to the production of other and more profitable commodities*, which might be exchanged for cheap foreign corn' (op. cit., p. 82. Parliamentary Speech of 7/3/21; italics added).

(d) On *population and wage-policy*: 'It is a painful reflection but not less true on that account that we can never get into a good system, after so long persevering in a bad one but by much previous suffering of the poor. The population can only be repressed by diminishing the encouragement to its *excessive* increase, — by leaving contracts between the poor and their employers perfectly free, which would limit the quantity of labour in the market to the effective demand for it' (Letter to Trower, 27/1/17).

² Cf. LESLIE STEPHEN, *The English Utilitarians*, vol. II, p. 84, and J. S. MILL, *Autobiography* (World's Classics), p. 21.

than trying to make out that the Ricardian doctrines were not concerned with practical applications, but simply with working out the purely logical implications of abstract 'models'. But surely the reader of James Mill can hardly be surprised that he had no notion of resorting to such a defence, and certainly, if the Millian-Ricardian economists had been faced by a parallel attack to that of Macaulay's they would have flatly refused to throw over their scientific pretensions.

But we cannot here embark on a critical examination of Ricardo's parliamentary activities or of his doctrines on economic policy and their influence and consequences. We simply wish in conclusion to make two points suggested by our account of the political and philosophical education which Ricardo received at Mill's hands.

(1) It has always been clear how much of Marxian economics comes straight from Ricardo's *Principles*, but it is interesting to find so many underlying features of the Marxian political analysis at least sketched out in Mill's letters. We do not refer simply to the incidental account of 'the class struggle' which Mill and Ricardo saw emerging in the early 1820s; nor to Mill's extreme progressivist historicism; nor to his burning *Ressentiment* and his wholesale attribution of the most sordid motives to all contemporary political leaders. We refer rather to such broader notions as that of a corrupt or exploiting class which has at the moment got possession of the state machine, but that one single simple sweeping step, now being forced by an inevitable current of events, will establish something like a 'classless' state, where 'the cause of causes, the cause of good government' will come in for its due, uncorrupted by anyone 'merely fighting up the pretensions of one aristocratic party against another'. Then we have Mill's idea of legislation or policy being an exact science, 'the effects of which may be computed with an extraordinary degree of certainty', yielding in every situation definite optimal conclusions of certain correctness, easily discernible by a properly educated and uncorrupted intelligence. From this idea it immediately follows that honest disagreement and doubt are impossible, and that political freedom should disappear. There can only, on the one side, exist a single correct line deducible with certainty by the disinterested scientific mind, and on the other side the vicious fallacies of those disqualified either by subservience to vested interests or lack of the proper education. Of course Mill and Ricardo did not trace out these consequences of their political ideas, any more than they drew the Marxian conclusions from their economic analysis. But in these letters we can see unmistakable signs of the all-too-easy 'utilitarian' transition, from the more dogmatic and deductive formulation of philosophic-radical utilitarianism to modern managerial totalitarianism. Mr Isaiah Berlin in

reviewing (in unpublished broadcast lectures) the origins of what he describes as 'the betrayal of freedom' takes as his first instance Helvetius' version of utilitarianism and of 'the automatic production of happiness by legislative action'. A similar 'betrayal' can surely be traced to James Mill and those infected by his ideas. (Bentham's theoretical analysis seems to have followed Helvetius very closely, though he can, of course, in many respects be favourably distinguished from his associate Mill. We would not want to represent him as an intellectual ancestor of 'Big Brother'.) Nevertheless, the telescreens, the great new invention of 1984, are simply a generalization of the principle of the Panopticon.)¹

(2) As a related though more indefinite conclusion, we would suggest a reconsideration of the usual treatment of Ricardo as the next great fellow 'classical' in the history of economic thought after Adam Smith, of whose work, though critical, he was nevertheless the continuer. We would urge, on the contrary, that much more

¹ Probably some of the most sinister intimations of 1984 in Bentham's writings come in his work *Panopticon or The Inspection House: containing the idea of a new principle of construction applicable to any sort of establishment in which persons of any description are to be kept under inspection*. . . 'A new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example' (Preface): Letter XXI on 'Panoptical' schooling is specially interesting: 'Books, conversation, sensible objects, everything, might be given. The genealogy of each observable idea might be traced through all its degrees with the utmost nicety: the parent stocks being all known and numbered. Party men, controversialists of every description, and all other such epicures, whose mouths water at the mammon of power, might here give themselves a rich treat, adapted to their several tastes, unembittered by contradiction. Two and two might here be less than four, or the moon might be made of green cheese.' One sort of objection Bentham swiftly brushes aside: 'Whether the liberal spirit and energy of a free citizen would not be exchanged for the mechanical discipline of a soldier, or the austerity of a monk? — and whether the result of this high-wrought contrivance might not be constructing a set of *machines* under the similitude of *men*? To give a satisfactory answer to all these queries, which are mighty fine, but do not any of them come home to the point, it would be necessary to recur at once to the end of education. Would *happiness* be most likely to be increased or diminished by this discipline? — Call them soldiers, call them monks, call them machines: so they were but happy ones, I should not care.' Finally Bentham defends his invention against the charge that it might be put to mischievous or ridiculous uses by the well-known argument that science and technology are neutral: 'Its great excellence consists in the great strength it is capable of giving to any institution it may be thought proper to apply it to. If any perverse applications should ever be made of it, they will lie in this case as in others at the doors of those who make them' (v. *Works*, vol. IV, pp. 37ff). It is impossible to say how important and typical the Panopticon idea was or is for Bentham's work and thought. But we do not think that it can simply be dismissed as an old man's freak, and it was not propounded as applicable solely to prisons. Anyhow, we doubt whether those who hail the author of the above quotation as a great prophet of classical liberalism are really putting themselves in a very strong position from which to censure modern trends — actual or imagined, overt or latent — in the direction of managerial totalitarianism and 'serfdom'.

emphasis should be placed on the contrast, or even conflict, between the methodological and political principles of these two great economists, and thence in the spirit of their policy proposals.¹ If the complementary political and philosophical thinker in the case of Ricardo is obviously James Mill, the political and philosophical thinker broadly complementary with Adam Smith was, as has several times been pointed out, Edmund Burke.² The nearest successor to Burke, among the contemporaries of Ricardo, was Coleridge (and later, Matthew Arnold), and most of Coleridge's severe criticisms of contemporary Ricardian Political Economy are in the spirit of Burke. Mill and Ricardo, on the other hand, just as they abandon the empirical treatment of Smith, completely flout all the most typical philosophical principles of Burke, as, for example, when they

¹ One wise contemporary observer who noted the fundamental contrast of principle between Smith and Ricardo, and who, while an enthusiastic disciple of the former, was deeply critical of the latter, was Sismondi: 'C'est par une marche absolument opposée qu'aujourd'hui même, en Angleterre, les disciples d'Adam Smith se sont éloignés de sa doctrine, et plus encore, à ce qu'il nous semble, de sa manière de rechercher la vérité. Adam Smith considérait l'économie politique comme une science d'expérience; il s'efforçait d'examiner chaque fait dans l'état social auquel il appartenait et de ne jamais perdre de vue les circonstances diverses auxquelles il était lié, les résultats divers par lesquels il pouvait influer sur le bonheur national . . . Ses nouveaux disciples, en Angleterre, se sont bien davantage jetés dans des abstractions qui nous font absolument perdre de vue l'homme auquel appartient la richesse et qui doit en jouir . . . Un journal, dont l'autorité est imposante dans la science, les annonce comme ayant fait faire à l'économie politique le plus grand pas qu'elle ait fait depuis Adam Smith. Cependant, nous sentons tellement que nous marchons sur un autre terrain' *Nouveaux Principes*, 3rd ed., 1951, vol. I, pp. 69-70. Very recently, Professor Macfie (*Economic Journal*, September 1953, pp. 656-7), anxious to defend Hume and Smith, has emphasized the very sharp distinction necessary between their 'utilitarianism' and that of J. Mill and Ricardo.

² On Burke and Adam Smith, see F. A. HAYEK, *Individualism and Economic Order*, pp. 4ff, and J. S. NICHOLSON, *A Project of Empire*, pp. 18ff. Burke was described by Smith as the only person he ever knew who thought on economic subjects exactly as he (Smith) did without any previous communication having passed between them. We trust that, for his part, Smith would have had no difficulty (as some passages in the *Wealth of Nations* might suggest that there would have been some slight difficulty) in immediately agreeing with such passages of Burke's as follows:

(1) 'We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that the stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and of ages.'

(2) 'It is one of the finest problems in legislation, and what has often engaged my thoughts whilst I followed that profession, "what the state ought to take upon itself to direct by the public wisdom, and what it ought to leave, with as little interference as possible to individual discretion"'. Nothing, certainly, can be laid down on the subject that will not admit of exceptions, many permanent, some occasional' (*Works of Burke*, World's Classics ed., vol. IV, p. 95 and vol. VI, p. 30).

explicitly introduce the analogy of economic theorizing and geometry — their main new contribution to the methodology of the subject.

Coleridge and Arnold, in diagnosing what they saw as the main threat to freedom, both used the rather Burkean term and concept of 'Jacobinism'. Coleridge inveighed against 'an assumption of prophetic power, and the general conceit that states and governments might be and ought to be constructed as machines, every movement of which might be foreseen and taken into previous calculation; to the multitude of plans and constitutions, of planners and constitution-makers and the remorseless arrogance with which the authors and proselytes of every new proposal were ready to realize it be the cost what it might in the established rights or even in the lives of men'. He describes one half of Jacobinism as consisting in 'abstract reasoning misapplied to objects that belong entirely to experience and the understanding'. Arnold describes 'Jacobinism' as follows: 'Violent indignation with the past, abstract systems of renovation applied wholesale, a new doctrine drawn up in black and white for elaborating down to the very smallest details a rational society for the future, — these are the ways of Jacobinism... Two things [which] are the signal marks of Jacobinism, — its fierceness, and its addiction to an abstract system.' Though not explicitly or consciously directed at James Mill and Ricardo — (Arnold specifically mentions Bentham and Comte) — most of this analysis of 'Jacobinism' obviously covers their habits of thought very precisely. In particular both Coleridge and Arnold emphasize the key role of an exaggerated and one-sided misuse of abstraction and the deductive method.¹

¹ See COLERIDGE's 'Statesman's Manual', especially pp. 28 and 33 in *Political Tracts of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley*, edited by R. J. White. Of Coleridge's comments on political economy Mr White writes: 'John Stuart Mill was to dismiss Coleridge's political economy as that of "an arrant driveller", but anyone reading these passages today, with their very modern treatment of taxation as an instrument for the circulation of wealth, of the trade-cycle, and of the fallacies of *laissez-faire*, will feel a good deal less confidence in that judgment than Mill's readers of the *Westminster Review* in 1840. Coleridge's views on the economic and social repercussions of war, possess a relevance and insight which will hardly be missed by a twentieth-century reader.' Apart from this last clause, which unfortunately we could show to be sadly over-optimistic, we should like to express our complete agreement.

Arnold's political ideas (like his father's educational ideas) have also been the remarkable subject of serious misrepresentation. Fortunately there is the essay of Professor J. Dover Wilson (in *Social and Political Ideas of the Victorian Age*, ed. by F. J. C. Hearnshaw, pp. 165ff; see also L. TRILLING, *Matthew Arnold*, p. 279-80). Professor Dover Wilson stressed the great influence on Arnold of Tocqueville and Burke and concluded by claiming that 'Arnold's political heirs are men like Mr Tawney' and by comparing Arnold's and Tawney's essays on equality. It seems that at least the line of descent from Burke to Tawney (through Arnold) has slightly more solid legitimacy about it than any claims to a Burkean pedigree

Some years ago, in his paper 'Individualism, True and False', Professor Hayek drew a most important distinction between two intellectual currents running in early nineteenth-century social and political thought, the 'true' empirical and cautious approach, to which Adam Smith had earlier belonged, and the 'false' arrogantly rationalistic which, though professedly liberal and 'democratic', nevertheless, in the words of Tocqueville (quoted by Professor Hayek), 'menait au pouvoir absolu'.¹ By some critics, Professor Hayek was accused of 'heresy hunting' or dividing the hard-pressed forces of liberalism.² Our own complaint would be to precisely the opposite effect, that is, that Professor Hayek broke off the application of his most illuminating distinction all too soon, in fact just at the point when it seemed that some of the well-established idols of classical economic liberalism might be endangered by a further pursuit of the analysis, and inevitably be classified as 'false', 'rationalistic' individualists, whose works should be regarded as among the earliest milestones along the road to serfdom. Professor Hayek pointed out that as contrasted with Tocqueville, Acton, the best of the Scottish philosophers, and Burke, 'the classical economists of the nineteenth century, or at least the Benthamites or philosophic radicals among them, came under the influence of another kind of individualism of different origin', and that 'the two traditions of thought [which] while bearing the same name, are divided by fundamentally opposed principles'. But Professor Hayek left us guessing as to just how far and how many of the classical economists he was thus seriously and fundamentally criticizing. Finally, Professor Hayek quoted Acton: 'Whenever a single definite object is made the supreme end of the State, be it the advantage of a class, the safety or the power of the country, the greatest happiness of the greatest number, of the support of any speculative idea, the State becomes for the time inevitably absolute.' Thus, as suggested by Acton, it is, for example, not the nationalization of the coal mines, as such, or a scheme of family allowances, which leads us down the road to serfdom, but rather it is the sort of rationalistic and dogmatic approach to politico-economic problems, which was introduced in this country in some cases by classical

¹ v. HAYEK, op. cit., pp. 1ff. Professor Hayek's treatment, as his title implies, is in very black-and-white terms, and whereas, for him, 'individualism' can be, and is, 'true' or 'false', 'collectivism', so it seems, can be, or is, *only* 'false' (whether empirically or by definition is not quite clear). It is difficult to tell how Professor Hayek would classify Burke's famous glorification of the state.

² v. HARROD, *Economic Journal*, 1946, p. 435. One may agree with Mr Harrod's criticisms of Professor Hayek's terminology without agreeing that Hayek's distinction is not of the highest significance.

put forward by those liberals who claim also to have inherited the classical habits of thought of James Mill and Ricardo.

economic liberals, some time before it came to inspire much of modern socialism.¹ Modern socialists simply inherited the idea of 'the single definite object' as the supreme end of the State, from their liberal predecessors, at the time same as Marx inherited so much of his economic analysis from Ricardo. The 'principle of utility' as conceived by Mill lays down just such a 'single definite object' as Acton pointed to as the essential foundation for the absolute State. We suggest that this Correspondence between James Mill and Ricardo affords an excellent starting point for a re-examination of the political philosophy of nineteenth-century economic liberalism and of the so influential new science of political economy set up by James Mill and Ricardo. Indeed, such a re-examination might well be extended down to more recent times. For it has just been claimed that 'the precious heritage' of 'Ricardo's habit of thought' has been preserved intact in Cambridge in the works both of Marshall and of Keynes, both of whose schools had 'their common origin in Ricardo.'² We do not believe that there is in fact any significant sense in which Ricardo's (or James Mill's) 'habits of thought' can be said to have been preserved by Marshall. But some broad methodological similarities *can* be traced between the new political economies of 1817 and 1936—though certainly the later 'revolutionaries' would have had no *raison d'être* but for the exclusive triumph of the earlier ones. There remains, however, the prior problem of getting quite clear as to what Ricardo's particular 'habits of thought' were, and how far they are 'a precious heritage'. New and invaluable assistance in this task can be gained from the James Mill-Ricardo correspondence, now set before us by Mr Sraffa.

¹ It is interesting to compare the philosophic temper of the new Millian-Ricardian political economy with that of Sir James Steuart's *Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy* (1767)—the great neglected economic counter-piece of the *Wealth of Nations*. Steuart is often described in ambiguous, if not misleading, terms as the last of the 'Mercantilists', or even as a 'Collectivist'. Anyhow, he is continually emphasizing the diffidence, qualifications, and limitations with which the political economist must advance his conclusions, the impossibility of simple universally-valid general rules, the complexity in any concept of 'the social interest', the dangers of one-sided reliance on *a priori* deduction, and of intellectual *systèmes*. Philosophically Sir James is much nearer Burke and at the opposite pole to James Mill and Ricardo, with their simple and certain formulae and their 'single definite objects' of policy (see, e.g., *Inquiry*, 1767, vol. I, pp. v, ix, 60, 123, 394, 399, 414, 416, 427, 498, for a few random examples). James Mill, reviewing a new edition of Steuart's works (1806) associates 'first-order' minds with the capacity for bold over-simplification, and characteristically hankers after a 'system'. He writes of Steuart: 'His mind was not of that first order which lays hold of general relations, and by happy classifications is enabled to disentangle confusion and ascend to simple and comprehensive axioms... There is no combination of principles in his volumes which can be called a system at all' *Literary Journal*, 1806, pp. 225ff.

² See Mrs J. Robinson's pamphlet 'On Re-reading Marx'.

COLUMBIA AND BYZANTIUM: THE NOTION OF CHARACTER IN EDUCATION AND LITERATURE

WILLIAM WALSH

1

CHARACTER is a brisk, abrupt word, an executive word, so precise in sound that we may be misled into accepting it as equally definitive in meaning. It suggests a decisive, stable structure, consistent and strongly set, whereas reflection shows its meaning to be remarkably evasive. Like an oiled wrestler it will not be held down. Awareness of self hardly helps. *Qu'est-ce que le moy?* asks Pascal, and elsewhere he comments: *L'homme ne sait à quel rang se mettre. Il est visiblement égaré, et tombe de son vrai lieu sans le pouvoir retrouver. Il le cherche partout avec inquiétude et sans succès dans des ténérèbres impenétrables.* It is possible that character is a word, the meaning of which is immediately apprehended, which is indefinable just because we know at once what it is, and there may well be some justification for this view. Perhaps character which we are accustomed to offer as the ultimate source of action, should remain unexamined, a primary datum which it is unprofitable to scrutinize and impossible to explain. If, nevertheless, we attempt to enumerate some of the chief notes involved in this very dense term, we do find prominent among them the notion referred to, character as the source of action and, in particular, of habitual action; another is character as individuality, the incommunicable self; and another is character as the person directed towards moral ends. Indeed, the habitual, moral self probably composes a large part of our ordinary understanding of character. But the defect of such a view, arising from an insistence on what is formed and static in character, is a failure sufficiently to take into account its potential and dynamic nature. Character is determined and finally cast only at the point of death; throughout life it has within it the power of turning, changing, deciding for the new. Certainly conditions limit character, which submits to boundaries and both assumes and persists with a certain shape, but it has, at a deeper and more significant place, impulses and movements towards the indeterminate and the unformed. Character is being, but it is also becoming.

There is a use of the term character which both illustrates the notion of character pointed at here and introduces at once its connection with literature, namely, character in the theatre, character as *dramatis persona*. From Aristotle to Bradley, character has provided

critics with a direct entrance into the central problems of drama and, in the memory of audiences throughout centuries, the history of drama, a chaos of conflicting styles, of different languages and antipathetic epochs, has arranged itself as a constellation of characters, an immense *dramatis personae*. It is true that some critics have overemphasized the importance of character in drama, forgetting that drama, being more comprehensive than character, includes also action, language, rhythm, imagery, tone, tempo and convention, and that all these are engaged in a system of complicated relations, which make sometimes one, sometimes another, dominant in contributing to the total effect. These critics have thought, in particular, of action as existing chiefly for the expression of character and implicitly of the dramatist as above all else a 'subtle-souled psychologist'. But the more rational view is that which holds that it is the plot, the whole of the action which is primary, and that character is but one of the modes of its expression, a mode which is not fixed or static and never finally formulated, for it obeys both the demands of the whole and the necessities of the local situation. Such a theory of character in drama certainly reduces the dominance given it by the great Romantic critics, just as it loosens and reforms a dramatic criticism that has become a character-ridden technique, but it by no means causes the idea of character in drama to powder away into insignificance. On the contrary, it might with justice be maintained that the post-Bradley approach enriches our notion of character, or at least that it compels us to attend to an essential but neglected truth about character, its fluidity and mobility, its irregular and turbulent vitality. And indeed this view of character would be appropriate to that category of art, the drama, and to its most intense and concentrated form, tragic drama, which is more than any other distinguished by life and energy, which is most remote from the elegiac, the contemplative and the reminiscent and closest to the actual, the present, the immediate transactions of life.

In the distillation of contemporary educational theory a larger and larger part is being taken not just by the findings of sociology and social psychology, but by their ruling assumption and by the attitudes provoked by them, a process which has gone with an intensifying insistence on the influential power of the group setting and the cultural pattern, and a prompt disposition to accept without much critical examination what may be called the Arapesh-Mundugumor hypothesis. One is led, in this situation, to wonder whether the dramatic view of character might not well be transposed as a corrective and counterweight from the understanding of character in literature to that of character in education. The prevalent phrase 'social engineering' with its equivalence of inert material and living persons, the main potentiality of whom is an

aptness to be worked upon in the interests of a reified abstraction like the group, urges upon us the need for a more active and powerful theory of character; not, it should be stated, with a propagandist's futile effort to impugn what is valid, but with the purpose of preserving another essential dimension so that our theory may keep some relevance in the face of the actual complexity of the facts. An active and powerful theory of character may be observed, or rather experienced, embodied and in operation in drama and supremely in tragic drama. It asserts the primacy of the person against the group, an assertion which is urgently required at a time when the development of character is seen as a process of conforming and adjusting (the overtones of the mechanistic metaphor are suggestive) to an external system of group forces. But what stands out as a common mark of major dramatic characters—as the common quality of their various powerful individualities—is that their development, far from being a matter of closer and closer approximation to group norms, discloses an increasing hostility to the values of the worlds they inhabit. The distance between the tragic character and his universe is lengthened not shortened, the tension between them becomes more not less acute, the original opposition quickens to a violence of rejection. Who could imagine an acquiescing Lear or a conforming Antigone? And these characters are not sports or aberrations, they are the symbols of a richer humanity, and we respond to them as we do because of our conviction that they perform an essential human office, the preservation of man's strangeness and his solitariness, his status as an alien.

If this is so, then surely the implied aim of much educational theory and practice, which is to fit man more easily into his situation to muffle the sense of strangeness in the universe, ignores a permanent fact of human nature, the fact that man ultimately is not at home in the world, that he is a person but a displaced person. Unlike the bird and the beast, to which the world offers the smooth caress of an environment whole and total as the womb, man, when not narcotized by ignorance and brutality, must flinch at the inhospitableness of his world. The universe of man is at all times impregnated with the scent of anxiety; every age is an 'age of anxiety'. Does it not appear, therefore, that the aim enunciated for education, in particular by many social psychologists, namely, the achievement of an integrated personality, derives less from an appreciation of balance and wholeness and more from a fear of anxiety which is taken as an infallible symptom of neurotic distress, on a par with fever and pain, instead of what it may be, a condition of developed psychic life, and that in fact the ideal of character advanced here is really that of the monolithic personality which, homogeneous, eupeptic and untouched by any division or tension,

deals in a competent, managerial way with its environment? Common experience denies the existence, and imagination recoils from the possibility of a human being as such an hygienic, biological abstraction. Certainly it receives no validation from tragic drama, where the essential relation is that of conflict, and where the relations of conflict between the person and the environment and between person and person are evidence of a more radical conflict within the protagonist himself.

Psychomachia in drama represents a high degree of self-consciousness in life. It exists if at all in primitive drama as a promise of possible development and the maturation of drama can be seen as a process in which merely latent conflict sharpens into more definite existence, and then recedes from the bluntly external into a subtler, inner world. Moreover, by a form of literary recapitulation the growth of the individual major dramatist rehearses the general evolution, moving through a similar accentuation of conflict and towards a comparable recession from the outer world. It is, paradoxically, when the artist's experience of the private world of conflict has deepened that his control of the public world gains in firmness and deftness; the grasp of the one leads not to evasion but to penetration of the other, to finer accuracy and sharper cutting power. The source of energy is at the centre, at the hub of the wheel. Lear's madness may be supposed to be one of the purest expressions of human conflict at its most agonizing, but his intolerable pain permits, and perhaps even provokes, intermittently, acute recognition and sure judgment of public issues, of corrupted justice, tainted authority, arrogant wealth.

It can be argued, then, that an education which is directed emphatically at the environment, a pragmatic and relativistic education, which ignores or denies the fundamental stress in man's nature and regards as morbid its emotional concomitant, anxiety, will fall short even of its own purpose. It is the Dostoevskian mind which first and most fully comprehends that utterly 'objective' activity, the dynamics of revolutionary power, the Lawrentian feeling for 'the flow and recoil of sympathy' which can be the ground for an implacably exact diagnosis of contemporary malady. If the emotional correlative for the run of mankind of the tragic hero's 'dense and driven passion' is anxiety, its moral correlative is guilt. In the eyes of the psychologists, anxiety is suspect; in those of the sociologists guilt is condemned. The intentions of both appear to be bent, at least as they are reflected in educational thought, on the effort to volatilize the concept of guilt. What began with the aim of correcting disproportion has concluded by dispersing the substance of guilt (of dispersing it, that is, intellectually, for modern man exhibits the curious dichotomy of one groaning in the toils of a guilt, the existence

of which he rejects). Guilt, it is held, is irrational and its irrationality, which can be inferred from the psycho-analytic account of the infantile origins of human behaviour and attitudes, is taken to be endorsed by the sociologists' reduction of morals to folkways or patterns of social learning.

There are two comments to be made on this view. In the first place, it is another example of the immoderately reductive habit of modern thinking which in its obsessive attachment to origins betrays an incapacity for certain kinds of immediate experience and a relative neglect of ends. In the second, the term irrational can be predicated of guilt only on an unduly narrow understanding of rational, one which assumes that the rational is to be equated with what satisfies the mathematical intelligence, a valid, but abstract and rigidly delimited category, emptied for its own purposes of all the concrete vivacity and the iridescent particularity found in life and in literature. Only if intelligence is restricted to *l'esprit de géometrie* and its area of exercise contracted to that crystalline sphere in which pure harmonies, already implicit in their premises, unfold according to the strictest logic, free of any alloy or alien essence, can guilt be accepted as irrational. The poetic intelligence, on the other hand, is not limited to the ratiocinative, and the world it works in has a thicker texture; here the organ of thought engages the widest reaches of personality, even its most divergent powers, so that in both the instrument and the act of poetic thinking there is productive discordance and fruitful controversy, while its object is the most varied and discrete experience, the chaos of actuality. In such a world the end is never a strict elaboration of the beginning nor the poetry merely a release of the implication of the intention; there is always the possibility of the operation of 'that force of poetry, that force which calls new powers into being, which embodies sentiment and animates matter'. In drama, as in life, given the appropriate circumstances, it is not the presence but the absence of guilt which is irrational, a form of moral imbecility, and although the fact of guilt may be foreseen and accounted for, its quality, the lacerating intensity of inward strife, is the creation of the person and the moment, and cannot be predicted. If literature is not just a marginal decoration of life but, as we must believe, both an accurate expression and a keen illumination of it, this is the kind of revelation about life which we may expect to discover in it and, it should be insisted, this is the kind of insight into life necessary for the educator. The disposition most valuable in education is closer, that is, to the poetic than to the mathematical intelligence. What is most required in the educator is intimacy of union, directness of contact with the deepest human experiences; and the temptation to which he is most exposed is the conceptual mediation of them, their blurring in a

mist of theory. And the truth about conflict and guilt, a truth which is sustained by the greatest literature, is that they belong to this primary category and are not secondary inferences from the behaviour of society or derivations from a system of abstract assumptions. The correct direction is not from the collective to the individual or the concept to the fact, but the opposite.

If conflict, anxiety and guilt are intransigently part of the human predicament, then educational theory, though it may attempt to ignore, cannot contrive to circumvent them. The mood in which educational ends are formulated, therefore, should be temperate rather than intoxicated, and although everyone will recognize the extravagance of Karl Popper's dictum, that the most education can hope to do is to do no harm, the modesty of its hope for education is not more absurd than the pretension of those for whom education, an amalgam of psychology, sociology and mental hygiene, is the successor of religion and philosophy, the creator of values and the guarantor of humanism. No more than culture can it reform, and no more than science can it transform, the nature of man. Those who set no limits to the powers of education can have neither a poetic nor immediate intuition nor a metaphysical or speculative vision of the nature of man. They can possess neither of the two appropriate criteria, the most particular and the most general. The educationists whose doctrine of man is neither tightly controlled by the particularity and immediacy of literature (which they reject because they regard it as saturated with subjectivity and assign impatiently to the limited category of the merely aesthetic), nor effectively directed by a philosophic vision of excellence (discarded through pragmatic hostility to the highest metaphysical generality), nevertheless employ, in place of standards, a functional paradigm of man, an operational ideal like an engineer's blueprint. But what is in engineering a declared, is in education a smuggled assumption, that the true and practical ends of education can be stated with absolute precision since of the material to be adjusted to the plan (character, human nature), one can have the kind of certainty possessed by the engineer in relation to precise forces and measured masses. The comprehension of the engineer is able to exhaust what is to be known of his material just because of its uniformity and homogeneity, because of the definition and regularity of its limits, qualities which can in no way be attributed to the material of the educator, the intricacy of character, the complex, intangible and evasive self. Just as the reality of conflict makes suspect the ideal of the homogeneous personality, so the evanescence of self renders derisory the possibility of a science of education which shall be total, inclusive and certain. Character cannot be reduced to the causes which have brought it about, nor broken down into the elements which constitute it, nor

resolved into a series of factors, forces or vectors. It could be treated like this only on the supposition that categories might be applied which leave nothing in it inexplicable or unaccounted for. But this supposition is false, for what happens in the application of mathematical or statistical categories is not that character is imprisoned but that it evanesces. The discrepancy between the measure and the measured remains. The complexity of character is not the complexity of an association of elements or a combination of parts, all of the same order, in a closed system, which is susceptible to analysis by scientific intelligence; it is the complexity attendant on a plurality of orders. One is not, in saying this, making any Pyrrhonic assertion about character, but only insisting that it is not to be grasped by inappropriate instruments. Just as in drama it is the fuller, more resonant poetic intelligence that can create character, so in education it is a less formal intelligence than the scientific that can comprehend, sympathize with and promote the life of character.

Any serious theory of education has to give an account of the life of character; at least it must offer a provisional answer to Pascal's question. A main European tradition, which still flows through however clogged a channel into English education, has taken that life to be in essence a conflict, a rigorous and unending effort to impose a higher discipline. For Plato it is the charioteer reason which must curb the violence of the passions, for Aquinas grace which is to master the turbulence of concupiscence, for Freud (who shows in this his true European temper) it is 'reality' which is to control the riot of libido. Plato and Aquinas quite explicitly take the battle to be one which has objective and universal implications; and even Freud, for whom it seems much more an enclosed and private quarrel, extends its operation, through the medium of myth, into the public and impersonal world. All alike maintain an unending conflict and a continuing tension and, as the ground of this, a fundamental duality in man. *Cette duplicité de l'homme*, says Pascal, *est si visible qu'il y en a qui pensent que nous avons deux âmes. Un sujet simple leur paroissoit incapable de telles et si soudaines variétés d'un présomption démesurée a un horriblement abattement de cœur.* Nevertheless with the Romantics it was the sense of duality that faded, the sense of simplicity that was strengthened. The life of character was no longer so emphatically read in the language of inward conflict and discipline; it was seen as the eliciting of an immanent form which had become accidentally tainted through contact with other things, civilization or common life or artificial feeling. By Rousseau and Wordsworth it was understood as a regress to, by Froebel as a progress towards, an uncorrupted perfection, by the first as a recovery, by the second as a revelation. The conflict that remained was decidedly of a more external sort, its

area not within but beyond the borders of personality, its form the antagonism of the integrated artist for his unenlightened world, its symbolic figures a deracinated Byron and a revolutionary Shelley. Romanticism in so much as it simplified the idea of the nature of man is a stage on the way to the American or pragmatic view of life and education. It did, however, conserve that part of the European tradition which insisted on the autonomy and spontaneity of the individual and the inwardness of the educational process; what it rejected was the dualistic structure of character and its cosmic setting. With Pragmatism not only is conflict obliterated and implication with the universe cancelled (that is the melody reduced to *naïveté* and the orchestration abandoned), but even the secret and evasive reality of the individual is abolished in favour of a tougher, more obvious and more public reality, the community. The conductor is handed over to the orchestra. 'Earlier psychology', writes Dewey, 'regarded mind as a purely individual affair in direct and naked contact with an external world. The tendency at present is to conceive individual mind as a function of social life, requiring continual stimulus from social agencies and finding its nutriment in social supplies.' If mind is a social function, it is not surprising that art, science and ethics should be given social motives, nor that the index of the worth of a motive should be the measure in which it has succeeded in society, and in contemporary society. Thus tradition is bowed out with individuality, and the life of character becomes a closer and closer approximation to the stereotype of the community at any given moment.

And this ideal is probably the gravest single difficulty that American education has to contend with. Romanticism, although it quickened the life of the imagination, nevertheless coarsened the concept of the nature of man, and Pragmatism, the stunted issue of Romanticism and nineteenth-century science, although it has greatly enlivened the method of education, making it active and exciting, has in turn vulgarized the notion of character. The imperative need of modern education is to maintain the vivacity of its means and to provide as their support a different, subtler and more mature concept of character; communication must be opened between positive knowledge and rooted wisdom, between Columbia and Byzantium.

2

'Byzantium' calls up the name of that modern writer who is gifted more abundantly than others with what educational thought most lacks: a quality of imagination which can make the immense, swooping leap, in appearance so irrelevant, in reality so pointed, and particularly in the situation described, represented by the

movement between the end of the first and the beginning of the second of these stanzas:

(1)

I walk through the long schoolroom questioning;
A kind old nun in a long white hood replies;
The children learn to cipher and to sing,
To study reading-books and history,
To cut and sew, be neat in everything
In the best modern way — the children's eyes
In momentary wonder stare upon
A sixty-year-old smiling public man.

(2)

I dream of a Ledaean body, bent
Above a sinking fire. . . .

The art of Yeats took its rise in a peripheral, even a parochial society, and in its progress it preserved the tang and flavour of that society, a verve and honesty of local accent; but it succeeded in arriving at a central, an authentically European vision of man. The poet managed so 'to purify the dialect of the tribe' as to turn it into a language apt to express an experience of man that was active and contemporary certainly, but also traditional and most deeply civilized: through the clarity and brilliance of the Irish idiom sound deeper and more ancient tones, the inflection of Dante, the resonance of Augustine, the voice of Plato:

I proclaiming that there is
Among birds or beasts or men
One that is perfect and at peace
Danced on Cruachan's windy plain
Upon Cro-Patrick sang aloud;
All that could run or leap or swim
Whether in wood, water or cloud
Acclaiming, proclaiming, declaiming Him.

The quick of that experience may be indicated by the phrase, the dramatic organization of character. It hardly needs to be added that it is not to be found in Yeats's drama which is singularly undramatic; it is present as an element, the ordering element, in the base of experience of self and others which is the source and impulse of that elaborate superstructure of myth, intuition, symbol and absurdity — 'the system'. And it is present as a reverberation, adding depth and dignity, to some of his finest verse. For Yeats personal life is in essence a duality (the Vision of Michael Robartes is a double vision), and the relation between the two poles is one of

conflict. The life of character is not an interior monologue, but 'a dialogue between self and soul', the tension between mask and will, the opposition of man and daimon, the debate of *hic* and *ille*. Conflict is often expressed by Yeats in terms which, although idiosyncratic in utterance, seem for all that to be a version of traditional oppositions: the opposition of 'sensual music' and the 'monuments of unageing intellect', of 'the dying animal' and 'the artifice of eternity', of 'Isaiah's coal' and 'original sin', of 'Homer' and 'Von Hügel'. This is, of course, evidence of the European ancestry of his language, but it would be misleading to take these antitheses as meaning that for Yeats the radical conflict is, as these examples may suggest, the opposition within the character of part against part, of particular power against particular power. Conflict for Yeats is not a partial domestic brawl but a total 'tragic war'. It is the whole of character under one *persona* tensed against the whole of character under another *persona*. And these *personae* or masks are neither disguises, nor aspirations, nor partial representations, but true expressions, charged with the full energy of the complete person.

By the help of an image
I call to my own opposite, summon all
That I have handled least, least looked upon . . .
I call to the mysterious one who yet
Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the stream
And look most like me, being indeed my double
And prove of all imaginable things
The most unlike, being my anti-self,
And standing by these characters disclose
All that I seek.

It is the total deployment of forces on each side which makes the conflict intense and enduring, the long drawn-out genesis of the firmness and vitality of character, that Yeats loved and celebrated in those

With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
That is not natural in an age like this
Being high and solitary and most stern.

and in those who

may consume
The entire combustible world in one small room
As though damp straw.

It is, then, the inwardness, the deeply embedded situs of the conflict, which makes it at once so potently active (the 'tragic war'

that is the origin of art which, Yeats emphasizes, is not 'the common dream' but 'a vision of reality'), and in addition the source of wisdom that can judge the cult of action, pragmatism, as a mere lapse into unintelligibility, 'the struggle of the fly in the marmalade'. To a degree that the Columbian or pragmatist attitude could not admit, the Byzantine sees character as self-creating, as distinguished from the passive product of external influences, not with the easy, flowing creativity of Romanticism, for which there are no obstacles to the soul's effusion, not 'with spontaneous joy and natural content', but with the more difficult, more intense creativity of the poet exerting himself against an elaborate stanza, and driven by 'the fascination of what's difficult'.

Myself I must remake
Till I am Timon and Lear
Or that William Blake
Who beat upon the wall
Till truth obeyed his call.

From this point of view, character consists in man's long, hard effort to remake himself, out of the actual and the potential, the present and the aspiration, the world of 'is' and the world of 'ought', but fundamentally from within himself, and primarily by himself. It consists in the tension and conflict between mask and mask, between self and anti-self, in the struggle to be born transformed.

He too has changed his part
In the casual comedy
He too has been changed in his turn
Transformed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

Complexity as a quality attaches not only to the structure of character but also to its context. Different as the schools of Columbia and Byzantium are in their account of character — on the one side a blind alley, on the other a labyrinth of being — they are even more opposed in their explanations of its setting; and the basis of their difference is, necessarily, their varied views on what is real. That is real for pragmatism, which is here and now, the substantial and the measurable; it admits only the power of the present and the authority of the actual, both of which appear to be weightier in the community than in the individual. Pragmatism inhabits a statistical universe, and its terms of reference recognize none but actuarial problems. There is, however another, a more ancient and a more complex attitude, for which what is real includes more than the brutality of fact, transcends 'this pragmatism, preposterous pig of a

world, its farrow that so solid seem', for which knowledge is also, as Santayana said, 'recognition of something absent', and in which character is set in a context, more fluid, more embracing and more mysterious. This is the universe of poetry. It is a world of which the dialectic climbs to no necessary, reconciling synthesis — the vulgarity of optimism — but can fracture at any time into final disaster; and proper to it, therefore, is the tragic view of life.

It is the submission of this essay that the tragic view of life corresponds with firmer general accuracy and more exact particular delicacy to things as they are, and that the persuasion of literature of which it is the most profound, the most enduring and the most convinced intuition, in this only confirms the compulsion of private experience. The life of the child and the adult is attended by stress and distress; the data of their experience combine to communicate, intimately and directly, touching upon the exposed nerve, tapping out on the tympanum, messages conveying the tragic pattern of existence. The immediacy of experiences compels assent to this conclusion. Liability to error arises with the need for the conceptual organization of experience, when the truth of percept can be overlaid by the falsity of concept. Not of course that conceptual organization is not in itself a part of experience nor that reflection is not in a sense as immediate as intuition, but its more abstract nature, its organizing function, its more conscious attitude, its tendency towards stability and order both tempt and require the mind to repose on assumptions which are necessarily other than one's own. The rhythms of experience are interpreted according to a metric of assumptions, and distortion occurs when the mind succumbs to the lure of a specious coherence at the expense of actual complexity, when fullness is sacrificed to neatness. Although, as Plato argues in the *Meno*, it is impossible for the teacher to fabricate experience, whether of value, knowledge or feeling, for the pupil, it is impossible for him not to affect his intellectual organization of it, and all the more powerfully by example, attitude and presupposition, when there is no deliberate intention of doing so. The pupil will accept the translation of his experience offered by the teacher who is invested with some of the parent's authority and the expert's prestige. Today, almost without fail, the translation will be phrased in the language of Columbia, and if so, it is decidedly a case of *traduttore, traditore*. But the frame of reference should bear to the body of experience a relation of intrinsic fidelity, and we have the evidence of literature for asserting that between the most valuable experience of the finest minds and the tragic outlook there is such a correspondence. And we must go on, if we believe in the community of character and the validity of literature, in the unity of man and the power of literature to make available for our possession

some part of reality, to the further assertion that a like correspondence exists between the deepest experience of every man and the tragic outlook.

Tension and conflict, anxiety and guilt, the dramatic form of character, and character set in a tragic universe — to accept these is to acknowledge what in our day so many influences conspire to stain, the peculiar dignity of man. Involved in this acknowledgment are a recognition of the difficulty and complexity of man's situation, and a rejection of the comforting illusion, pervasive and corrupting in education, that a greater accumulation of positive information, a more thorough psychology, a more exhaustive sociology, a fuller mastery of teaching method, will disperse the painful and the incomprehensible in man's predicament and finally pluck out the heart of the mystery. The theory of modern education requires to be braced with the austerity of thought that knows its real strength and the asceticism of attitude that admits its proper limits, which are the qualities of a mature study.

Through all the lying days of my youth
I swayed my leaves and flowers in the sun
Now I may wither into truth.

BOOK REVIEWS

E. M. BUTLER: *The Fortunes of Faust*. Cambridge University Press, 30s. net.

This is a fascinating book: fascinating in its comprehensive and intelligible survey of both the profound alterations and the slighter variations of detail in the literary relations of the Faust Myth from the Spiess *Faustbuch* of 1587 to Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* of 1947.

The Faust myth has proved astonishingly adaptable, and in its repeatedly different appeal can be used as a text for a history of the literary consciousness through four and a half centuries: the *Faustbuch* had a strong theological bias which P. F. in his English translation of 1592 hardened into a discursive epic of the Calvinist view of human guilt, and Marlowe grafted that on to the drama of the Renaissance hero. Seventeenth-century rationalism discredited the older Faustus, and he survived them as a figure (both for his magic and his fate) of the condemned Superstition. As the eighteenth century added sentiment to rationalism, Faust acquired both a family (the Pathetic Parents) and a tendency to be saved. In the context of 'Storm and Stress' and Romanticism, Goethe dominated a host of minor Faustus with a Juanesque love tragedy, an ultimate salvation, and a renewed attention to magic and witchcraft. The twentieth-century awareness of evil is more sympathetic to the *Faustbuch*, but Mann has again largely rejected the supernatural, transposing it into the tortured illusions of an insane musician reflecting his country's mad career.

The complexity of Faust study derives from his non-literary tradition: Faustian magic was a small disreputable offshoot of the ritual aspect of the Magus myth; Faust himself a cheap conjurer who misappropriated the popular lore at a time when Christianity had finally reduced magic to the work of the devil; and Faust's 'magic' was entirely 'black'. He practised largely in the fairground and market place, so that he and not his greater predecessors acquired the popular reputation. Or rather, reputations: condemned by the preachers and revived by the malcontents, Faust can be seen as a focus of the popular conscience, the figure of Evil feared and hated but sometimes courted, varying according to the attitudes to Evil in the two centuries of his popularity.

This figure is perceptible behind the long succession of popular Faust dramas and puppet plays. Their crude or simple words could not alone excite a popular audience (as Marlowe's could): the popular art depends on the popular awareness of the hero. Marlowe's Elizabethan ambivalence derides and admires, laughs and fears simultaneously; Mountfort's restoration farce burlesqued the old tragedy, but still could not ignore it, 'the Lilliputian actors were busy dismembering it and carrying it off piecemeal to the shouts of delighted and derisive laughter; putting tragedy in its place'. Mountfort's was a partly sophisticated audience; but the puppet plays at the beginning of the eighteenth century were equally farcical, and the old tragedy was soon ousted for ever by the triumphant figure of Punch:

The Devil with his pitch-fork fought,
While Punch had but a stick, Sir,
But kill'd the devil, as he ought.
Huzza! there's no Old Nick, Sir.

In Germany Faustian magic and the puppet hero had a longer history: but the reaction was eventually the same, 'Faust became more and more inseparable in the popular mind from his farcical double Hans Wurst, Pickelhäring, Crispin, Casper, or by whatever name he went'. The Devil receded into the Dark Ages, and the eighteenth-century clowns were able 'to laugh magic out of court.' But

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it required Lessing's sophisticated mind to conceive the final optimism, that Faust could be saved. Faustian magic had lost its hold on the popular imagination, where rationalist optimism is still unreasonably strong, and the popular drama languished into the hands of the scholars, dead to the fairgrounds: Faust became a predominantly literary symbol.

But the Magus myth has not therefore ceased to be fertile; nor did it disappear entirely under the cover of Don Juan in the jungle of German literary work in Goethe's lifetime (sometimes interesting and impressive, but so dense that all Professor Butler's skill cannot save it from tedium). However surprisingly, the awkward shape of the myth's primitive character obtrudes through Mountfort's laughter, Lessing's optimism or Goethe's romanticism. On that relationship between myth and literature, between conscious and unconscious control, Professor Butler is fascinating; fascinating too on the relationship of popular art and popular superstition; to establish these themes the separate studies of the Myth of the Magus and of Ritual Magic were necessary and this final volume does not make its points unless they are read first (nor is their value clear until the final volume has been read). The fascination does fail unfortunately on the relationship of 'popular' art to literary work; the emergence of literary excellence Professor Butler chooses to regard as another kind of magic, and accordingly seems to find popular art more exciting: the contribution of Goethe to the 'notions, scenes and *motifs* originating in other minds' which he 'soaked up like a sponge' is simply 'that spiritual alchemy which is the fascinating function of poetry'. If this seems a trifle naïve it is also honest, a comment where one is needed on materials provided without distortion which are therefore available for further reflection. Professor Butler's handling of her other themes is not in the least naïve; the study of their inter-relations is brilliant.

NICHOLAS BROOKE

A. C. CROMBIE: *Augustine to Galileo, the History of Science A.D. 400-1650.* Falcon Press, 42s. net.

In this volume Dr Crombie has set himself the double task of describing, first the effect upon the intellectual development of Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries of the acquisition in Latin of a great mass of Hellenistic science and philosophy (chiefly in derivative forms through Islamic sources), and secondly the gradual evolution from the synthetic endeavours of this period of a more original and critical spirit of inquiry, making use especially of mathematics and the experimental method. His thesis — and it is one buttressed by many specialist studies of the present century — is that the modern attitude to nature, and the modern view of the aims and methods of science, were developed slowly throughout the period between the renaissance of the twelfth century and the scientific revolution, which was the product of their elaboration and fruition. Then at last the way of applying techniques (e.g. of mathematization) became clear; new concepts, long maturing, were defined and exploited; the level had been reached when a pregnant alliance between science and technology became possible. Dr Crombie has so chosen the period for his principal emphasis (for in spite of the sub-title the science of Europe, and more seriously of Islam, before 1200 receives very slight treatment) that the later middle ages appear as the time of gestation of the modern scientific spirit.

This, of course, is an interpretation very different from that to be found in the short histories of science. It is supported by a mass of evidence in the chapter on 'Criticism of Aristotle in the later Middle Ages', in which, besides recent studies of the antecedents of the scientific revolution, Dr Crombie has made good use of the contemporary interest in the problems of medieval philosophy. He is able to show how discussions of the bases on which knowledge rests, and of the logical

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processes used to frame a structure of explanation from these data, were relevant to the formation of a new scientific method. No previous book, so far as I know, has been so successful in summarizing and interpreting the findings of recent research into the history of science from the thirteenth century to the early modern period, nor in relating to this the equally important philosophic and technological achievements of the same epoch. The story is told in some detail, generally with a well-maintained perspective, and the often perplexing intellectual exercises of medieval natural philosophers are placed in a comprehensible intellectual context.

This is a far more serious attempt to appraise the permanent value of late medieval scientific activity than that of any comparable volume—the monumental works of Sarton and Thorndike belong, naturally, to a different order. But the judgment cannot be considered as final. Dr Crombie rightly sets forth the evidence against a number of hoary clichés—by appealing, inevitably, to the giants of the period. The weaknesses of medieval science are more real than this method would suggest. For example, Nicholas of Autrecourt is cited as ‘attaining a higher degree of philosophical empiricism’ than was attained again before Hume, but it is not mentioned that Nicholas was condemned, and his writings destroyed, precisely on account of his unorthodoxy. And the Latin West was not starting from zero level: its work began at the higher point of Islamic science. The relevant question may be, therefore, not only ‘What evidence is there of growing scientific activity after the twelfth century?’ but ‘How successful were medieval men in improving upon the heritage they had received?’ The answer to this last is, that in some important branches of science they were not successful at all. The renaissance humanists were not being merely pedantic when they turned for a fresh draught on classical sources, when they preferred the original Galen to Mondino’s commentary, for example. There were, again, far more serious intellectual barriers to surmount in the early stages of the scientific revolution than Dr Crombie’s final chapter would always suggest, though it is just that he should draw attention to the instances where medieval scholars had already abandoned the pure Greek tradition. In this connection it may be noted that the elaborate, reasoned discussion by Nicole Oresme in the fourteenth century of the case for attributing a diurnal motion to the earth is summarized by Dr Crombie at some length, but he omits to add that Oresme’s final judgement is against it, on Scriptural authority. The essential point is that even such an original thinker as Oresme could not distinguish between the true province of theology and the province of natural science.

The medieval advance towards a modern scientific attitude was perhaps more halting and sporadic than Dr Crombie’s analysis would indicate. Even the important discussions on scientific methodology seem of greater importance in philosophy, than for the extent of their actual application, before the renaissance, to actual inquiry into nature. Such points demand further investigation, but meanwhile this book illuminates the whole subject. Its illustrations are well chosen and reproduced, and its only physical defect is in the thickness of the paper, which makes the volume unnecessarily cumbersome.

A. R. HALL

MAX KENYON: *Mozart in Salzburg*. Putnam, 21s. net.

In view of the enormous size and extent of the Mozart literature that has appeared in the last fifty years, Mr Kenyon may well have hesitated before adding to it. But his approach is new; he concentrates on the Salzburg background, and Mozart is seen only through the times that he spent in his native town and the music that he wrote there. As a result of this, we get a vivid picture of the Mozart family as a whole, and particularly of Leopold, who really dominates the story. But so far as Wolfgang’s life is concerned, the view of it is inevitably patchy,

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despite the liveliness and individuality of Mr Kenyon's writing. The same may be said about the portions dealing with the music, at the end of which we are told, quite rightly, that the works written at Salzburg cannot as a whole lay any strong claims to greatness, despite the high quality of some of them. But there is much that is admirable in the critical chapters. For a clear view of Mozart's style some knowledge of that of his contemporaries is essential; Mr Kenyon clearly has this, and his choice of musical illustrations is apt. There are some interesting observations on the instrumental style of the keyboard works, and some particularly thoughtful and suggestive comments on Mozart's approach to ecclesiastical music compared with that of Bach or Handel. The book is very attractively produced, and, even if its plan may have disadvantages, it contains much that is of undoubted value.

P. F. RADCLIFFE

C. P. FITZGERALD: *Revolution in China*. Cresset Press, 21s. net.

In their relations with China, the record of the British in estimating political trends and in the intelligent anticipation of events is decidedly poor. They went to China with the primary, or secondary, aim of converting the Chinese to Christianity, yet they refused to back the T'ai P'ings with their Christian-inspired ideology but helped to destroy them and to keep the petrified remnant of the Manchus on the throne; they suppressed the Chinese revolutionaries in Malaya, etc., in aid of a 'friendly government' which had fomented the Boxer uprising against foreigners; and, when the Manchus abdicated, they appointed a British tutor for the deposed Emperor in the expectation that the Manchus would be restored. (This same tutor (Sir) Reginald Johnston, in 1934 foretold a coming Confucian revival. If he was right, it has taken an unexpected form.) Theoretically the British stood for democracy, but in China they favoured the war lords and reactionary rumps. In 1923, your reviewer, who as a young official happened to be staying in the British Legation in Peking, was deputed to represent Britain at the election of the President. The card he held said, 'Admit the British Minister', but the latter, knowing that the result was a foregone conclusion (Tsao Kun having paid \$5000 a vote) wisely refused to waste his time in attending. Meanwhile, in Canton, the British refused to recognize Sun Yat-sen and his 'legal' government (certainly more legal than that of Peking) and withheld from him his share of the local customs revenue. When Chiang rose to power the British were still recognizing the Peking regime, and switched their recognition to the Kuomintang only when they were victorious, thus identifying once more a popular movement with anti-foreignism. In Hong Kong, the Governor, Sir Cecil Clementi, refused to allow the teaching of the new-fangled National Language in his university — but such examples could be multiplied indefinitely. It was only in 1945 that the British relinquished to the Americans their traditional task of backing the wrong horse or keeping back the ocean with a broom.

But if British official prescience has been lacking in the past, the significance of China's revolution has not escaped British observers on the spot — scholars, missionaries and businessmen. Politically they may range between opposite poles, but they are united in declaring that the Chinese Revolution is an event of the greatest magnitude which can never be reversed. I know of no person who has had first hand experience of China over the years who thinks otherwise.

Mr Fitzgerald says that the history of the Chinese Revolution has yet to be written. Maybe that is so, but he has himself laid firm foundations for such a history, and when the time comes for writing it definitely I doubt whether many of the bricks he has laid will require to be replaced. His work is thorough and thoughtful and the writing for the most part brilliant and sustained. I have gone through the book carefully, and in the light of thirty years of intimate contact

with Far Eastern affairs I cannot find any substantial point on which I disagree with the author. While sympathetic to China and understanding of the West, it is written from the standpoint of philosophical anarchism — 'that all governments are bad, and some are worse' — a sentiment which I heartily endorse. The book should be made compulsory reading for all politicians and diplomats of the West.

Meanwhile, in the U.S.A. the China Lobby continues to bludgeon opinion in favour of a world war to restore Chiang Kai-shek to power. Senator McCarran, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee on Internal Security, which recently conducted an inquiry into the affairs of the Institute of Pacific Relations, says, 'I am convinced from the evidence disclosed in this inquiry, that but for the machinations of the small group that controlled and activated the I.P.R., China today would be free'. 'This,' as Eric Sevareid remarked in a N.B.C. commentary, 'is a double-think on a scale to make one's reason totter.'

VICTOR PURCELL

A. D. C. PETERSON: *A Hundred Years of Education. Duckworth, 21s. net.*

This is one of the best books on education to appear for a very long time. It is a study of education during the last hundred years in England, France, Germany and the United States. It is broad in its scope, for it covers administration, state supervision, secondary and public school developments, adult education and the universities. It also includes useful chapters on developments in educational theory — principally in the field of psychology — and on examinations and the training of teachers. To all these matters Mr Peterson brings a lucidity of thought and an economy of phrase which are wholly admirable.

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exercise in the field of comparative education. It is informed, on the one hand, by an acute perception of the social, political and economic factors which have influenced practical developments in education, and, on the other, by an understanding of the philosophical assumptions underlying changes in educational theory. In discussing Herbart, for instance, Mr Peterson shows clearly his connection with the association psychology of Hume and James Mill. In the same concise fashion he discusses the developments of 'faculty' psychology, and its educational applications. In the following chapter, the account of Dewey's educational theories and their philosophical basis is instructive for the general reader, and an excellent introduction for the student. Finally, Mr Peterson's discussion of the German university tradition deserves a special word of praise. The principle of academic freedom and its implications for German university teachers are clearly traced, and the demand for minute, accurate and objective research is shown as a reaction to 'the misty adoration of the Absolute' represented by the idealism of Fichte and Hegel. This whole chapter on university development is a most illuminating survey.

Mr Peterson is equally stimulating in his discussion of the practical and political problems of education. Of state supervision, he writes: 'in general, supervision has been adopted either by states which wished to use it for training a special type of citizen or by those which placed more emphasis on the content of education than the process' (p. 46). But he sees the 'fixed age limit imposed on candidates for external examinations' as 'clearly a step in this direction' (i.e. of a supervised content of education by the state). Later, he sums up the problems of educational reform in the nineteenth century: 'Two problems were confused, how to bring the curriculum of the secondary school and the university up to date and how to provide . . . an efficient post-primary education for those who were not going to the university. The former was mainly the interest of educationists, the latter of statesmen. The statesmen were also concerned with a third related problem, how to enable the ablest members of the population to get a secondary or university education irrespective of their parents' means.' These extracts show the special character of Mr Peterson's book. It is not history: it is rather a key to history—a sociological analysis of problems, forces and factors, and of the climate of opinion brought to bear on them.

In the course of his book, Mr Peterson touches several issues of contemporary interest, such as corporal punishment, comprehensive schools, co-education, examinations and intelligence tests. To each he brings a tolerant understanding of other views than his own, and frequently a refreshing comment, as witness his remarks about comprehensive schools: 'In a large city, the English system of differentiation (between types of secondary education) does mean that each type of school will draw its pupils from an area considerably wider than the comprehensive school of anything like the same size would serve . . . The great educational objection to the comprehensive school is that it would be too big . . . if it is not too big, then it is bound to be socially exclusive' (p. 150). On examinations, he comments that they can only avoid dictating the curriculum 'if nobody wants to pass them'. This is true, but it then raises the question of who is to prescribe the examination, and there is clearly a difference between a large external examination taken by many schools and an internal one controlled and set, at least in part, by those who control the curriculum. The latter is still, as Mr Peterson says, a discipline but it is something very like self-discipline.

Enough has been said of this book to show that it will be pleasant and profitable reading for the general reader, and a reliable introduction for students. In one special way, it may be highly commended to students: it is a synthesis of many aspects of education normally treated as separate subjects in university departments for the training of teachers. It brings together theory and practice, the political problem of who is to be educated, and the educational problem of

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W. H. BURSTON

JEAN H. HAGSTRUM: *Samuel Johnson's Literary Criticism. Minnesota University Press: London, Geoffrey Cumberlege, 28s. net.*

Writings which are as amenable to docketing but as recalcitrant to systematization as Dr Johnson's, are probably best dealt with on Professor Hagstrum's plan in this book: by a series of discussions on Johnson's attitude to certain key terms and key ideas such as reason, nature, wit, pleasure, the pathetic and the sublime. Full use is made not only of the *Lives of the Poets* and the *Preface to Shakespeare* but also of the periodical essays, *Rasselas*, and the Dictionary, the last of these being of particular service (it is referred to freely, yet carefully) in confirming or commenting on Johnson's meaning in his use of individual critical terms. His basic beliefs — moral, philosophical, and religious — are examined as a necessary part of the background of his criticism; his strong interest in the connections between literature and 'life' or 'experience' is well brought out; he is rescued from charges of unimaginativeness and insensitiveness; and the general trend is to counteract notions of him as dogmatist or as narrow neo-classicist (or, for that matter, as romanticist).

All this is excellently done, and the main view we have of Johnson's criticism is well described as 'experience moving gradually toward principle'. It may be thought, however, that Professor Hagstrum presses too far his desire to present a non-authoritarian Johnson who tests everything by the pulse of experience. To say that his mind, far from being dogmatic, was 'tentative and skeptical', is to transform the inconsistencies and contradictions scattered throughout his works into something far less downright (and far less convincing!) than they strike most readers as being — especially if we recall that he himself censured Addison's criticism as 'tentative and experimental'. No: the long-established 'dogmatism' of Dr Johnson is surely no myth; and as it is not the dogmatism of a person with a creed or a programme, but the lively, confident, and vigorous assertions of a powerfully feeling mind, it needs no excusing.

The strength of this book lies in its analysis of Johnson's basic ideas, and the clear presentation of these is admirable. Its usefulness and interest would have been increased if the author had taken equal pains with Johnson's applied criticism. This was apparently not part of his purpose; any individual pieces of criticism in the *Lives of the Poets* which Professor Hagstrum does quote are merely used in the illustration of some argument, and are not examined for their own sakes: even the famous survey of Metaphysical poetry is only 'brought in' to the chapter on 'True Wit'. This means that there is often either no indication, or else a serious distortion, of what Johnson actually thought about many of the writers so 'adduced'. The only remark on Swift's prose style, for example (on p. 98), that Johnson approved of its 'neatness', gives no idea at all of 'Johnson on Swift'; similarly, quotations are sprinkled from the Life of Butler, but Johnson's interesting attitude to that poet and to *Hudibras* is left undiscussed; Young, Prior, and even to some extent Milton suffer in the same way. Professor Hagstrum in his Preface says that his book 'neither praises nor censures its subject from the vantage point of any contemporary critical movement', but the reader may feel this to be a scrupulosity which turns tail on just the most necessary investigations — those into the specific judgments Johnson made, on individual authors and works. There is, in the end, not much that is very striking or seminal about his general conceptions of poetry and prose: yet his applied criticism does have these qualities to a high degree, and continues to exert them even in such antipathetic periods as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have

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seen. What does the author think of Johnson's estimate of *Lycidas*? This book does not tell.

Apart, however, from the fact that the title promises a little more than appears in the performance, Professor Hagstrum's study of Johnson's literary criticism is a very competent, well argued, and usefully comprehensive piece of work.

EDWIN MORGAN

JOHN MADGE: *The Tools of Social Science*. Longmans, 25s. net.

It is a sign of the times that the title of this book is not misleading. One expects it to be concerned mainly with that part of sociology which deals with the study of contemporary society by direct observation, excluding economics and political science but including a fair amount of psychology of the social variety. And so it is, but it also includes — as a welcome feature — a chapter on documents other than responses to questionnaires and records of interviews. But the potential reader needs further guidance before he can decide whether this is the sort of book he is looking for. The word 'tools' suggests techniques rather than methodology, and techniques occupy most of the work. But the first chapter is devoted to basic questions of language and logic, while the section on experiment plunges boldly into the deep waters of scientific method. This arrangement has the advantage of making the core of the book plain sailing, but the inexperienced reader should be warned not to assume that the difficult methodological problems which are here linked with experiment do not arise when investigation is by means of observation and interview. Mr Madge is most anxious, and rightly so, to show that controlled experiment is possible in social science. But, since perfect experimental conditions are rarely found and since it must be the constant aim of the user of observation (in the broadest sense) to devise techniques which give the closest attainable approximation to experimental methods, it is risky to stress too much the difference between the two.

The best way of conveying the quality of this book is to say that it is not a manual in which the social researcher will find exact and sufficient instruction with the aid of which he can go confidently to work; but it is much more like a personally conducted tour, with a cultured, sensitive and sensible guide (who is neither hurried, flustered nor pompous) through the workshops of contemporary social scientists. We see them busy with their absorbing tasks and we are reminded of Dante quietly conducted by Virgil through — no, not through Hell, but through Purgatory. Paradise, it is clear, still lies some distance ahead, and Beatrice has not yet put in an appearance.

This soothing atmosphere is intermittently disturbed when we reach the circle occupied by those who conduct mass interviews. Here our guide injects fragments of a manual on such things as sampling errors and standard deviation, and his remarks on attitude measurement are in places too laconic to be entirely lucid. Perhaps this is just as well, since it would hardly be possible in a book of this kind to explore profoundly the difference between the scalogram and latent structure analysis.

Certain general impressions emerge. First that the development of the tools of social investigation is outrunning the progress of ideas as to what the tools are to be used for. Secondly, that those who are refining the tools are throwing the emphasis increasingly on psychology (opinions, attitudes and personality) and to a diminishing degree on social structure. And thirdly, that in the present phase of these studies the human race is, almost inevitably, treated as if it were a population of semi-morons, incapable of rational thought or intellectual effort and meekly responsive to the benevolent attentions of learned scientists who address it in the language of the infant school. This is, of course, an overstatement, but it contains a justifiable hint at the danger that questioning, which must be attuned to the lowest common denominator, may smother those mental

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forces which count for most in society and at the same time often appear to discover in those to whose mentality it is adjusted modes and categories of thought which have in fact been imposed upon them by the form of the questions. We all know that questions which are intrinsically unanswerable may be quite easily answered within the framework of a familiar convention — whether it be that of the examination paper, the *Fragebogen* or the radio game of Twenty Questions. There is a risk that the social scientist may gradually create a similar convention without fully realizing what he is doing.

T. H. MARSHALL

ROBERT GIBSON: *The Quest of Alain-Fournier*. *Hamish Hamilton*, 21s. net.

Henri Alain-Fournier is one of the most engaging figures in twentieth-century French literature, a man of singular charm and the author of an irreplaceable novel. His life was short and outwardly uneventful. He was born at La Chapelle d'Angillon in the department of the Cher on October 3rd, 1886, reported missing at St Rémy in September 1914, a few days before his twenty-eighth birthday, and never heard of again. He met his future brother-in-law, Jacques Rivière, at the Lycée Lakanal in 1903, worked for a brief period as a correspondence clerk with a London firm, became the literary columnist of the *Paris-Journal* and spent some four years writing *Le Grand Meaulnes* which narrowly missed the Prix Goncourt in 1913.

The vast correspondence with Jacques Rivière contains some of the most delightful letters written by a young man since the letters of Jules Laforgue. It is also an invaluable document on French literary taste in the first decade of the present century and a striking picture of the development of two highly gifted young men. Alain-Fournier's *Lettres à sa famille* are no less delightful and deserve to be better known than they appear to be in this country, but his fame rightly rests on his solitary novel. One critic has recently spoken of the 'lonely eminence' of *Le Grand Meaulnes*, but the words are not altogether exact. It certainly describes better than any other novel a particular moment of experience which Mr Gibson well calls 'that fleeting period of life . . . between the end of youth and the beginning of full manhood', but it is firmly rooted in what must now be regarded as part of the French literary tradition. Alain-Fournier and Rivière both came under the sway of Symbolism. With Rivière it was a passing phase against which he later reacted with some violence, and he never grasped his brother-in-law's attachment to Laforgue. On Alain-Fournier the influence of Symbolism was deep and lasting, and that of Laforgue decisive. The novel was written at almost the same age as Laforgue's finest verse and both writers deal with the same moment of experience. His sensibility possesses the same extraordinary delicacy and freshness as Laforgue's while his nostalgia for lost childhood, his preoccupation with innocence and his longing not merely for love, but for chaste love, continually recall the poet of the *Derniers vers*. His novel is both a Symbolist novel and a *roman poétique* which has left its mark on the work of later writers.

Mr Gibson's study is one of the most attractive critical biographies that I have read for some time. Temperamentally, he is perfectly suited to his subject and his book is evidently a labour of love. He has not only explored the Sologne country to which Alain-Fournier was so deeply devoted, but he has had the assistance of Mme Isabelle Rivière who has placed a great deal of unpublished material at his disposal. He goes very thoroughly into the autobiographical elements in the novel, and tells for the first time the full story of Alain-Fournier's brief encounter with and his hopeless love for the girl who provided the model for his heroine. He also gives us an unexpected glimpse of him playing rugby for the Paris Université Club in a side which included Péguy and Jean Giraudoux.

MARTIN TURNELL